

Attention is drawn to the fact that the copyright of this thesis rests with its author.

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior written consent.

D 16277/76

Ross, M.

pp 438

AN EXAMINATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WORLDS IN
MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Mary Ross

Department of English Studies,
University of Stirling.

September, 1975

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	
Introduction	(i)
Chapter 1	
Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London	1
2 [*] Henry James	68
3 Edith Wharton and Sinclair Lewis	143
4 F. Scott Fitzgerald: <u>The Great Gatsby</u>	200
5 Nathanael West, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Budd Schulberg, Normal Mailer and Gore Vidal	212
6 William Faulkner: His Public World	271
7 William Faulkner: <u>As I Lay Dying,</u> <u>Light in August, The Sound and the Fury,</u> and <u>Absalom, Absalom!</u>	307
8 Mary McCarthy, Vladimir Nabokov, Bernard Malamud, John Barth and Saul Bellow	362
Bibliography	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The debt of gratitude which I owe my supervisor, Mr. G. A. M. Wood, for his assistance in compiling this thesis is not amenable to either description or repayment. It must suffice to say that had it not been for his patience, tolerance, encouragement and incisive, but ever just, criticism, this thesis should never have been written.

I should also like to thank Professor T. A. Dunn for inviting me to return to Stirling to do research, my mother, Mrs. Mary Ross, for her moral and intellectual support, my husband, Mr. N. A. Bowman, for his ethnomethodological insights, Mrs. Ruth Howden and Miss Ann Hamilton for their forbearance and Dr. Alastair Niven for his timely advice.

We must grant the artist his subject,
his idea, his donné; our criticism
is applied only to what he makes of
it. .

(Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction')

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Department of English Studies

MARY ROSS

Abstract of thesis entitled 'An examination of public and private worlds in modern American literature', submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

September, 1975

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines American novels written between 1890 and 1975 from the point of view of their formal and structural aspects and considers the implications arising from the manner in which they are deployed within the context of individual works. The phrase 'public and private worlds' was formulated to describe these aspects. The 'public world' of a novel is the environment in which the characters have their existence and comprises places, physical objects and that area of tacitly agreed norms, society. Where groups of characters are instrumental in translating these norms into pressures upon the individual, then they too are considered as a part of the public world. 'Private worlds' are defined as those aspects of the fiction seen as belonging to a specific character; his words, thoughts, actions and emotions, and all these taken together as his consciousness, are considered as the private world. The phrase public and private worlds is a dichotomy only in the sense that it refers to two defined components of the novel; the 'worlds' are not assumed to be diametrically opposed. Indeed, this thesis is largely about the varied ways in which authors relate them.

The weighting given to each side of the dichotomy in individual novels is considered and the resultant 'balance' described as the 'overall fictional reality', a term which takes into account the effect which the combination of public and private worlds has upon the reader. Whilst the aim of this thesis is primarily analytic, the overall fictional reality is evaluated on the grounds of its coherence, subtlety and artistic merit, all factors which emerge naturally from the application of the dichotomy.

The dichotomy may, of course, be used to analyse novels of any period or culture. American novels written over the past nine decades present a considerable challenge to its validity as a critical tool, for they vary widely in style, content and artistic worth and provide a 'fictional' mirror of the vast social changes occurring during this period. In order to present a further challenge to the dichotomy and to give the discussion extended scope, each chapter deals with different configurations of books, ranging from the works of a single author to those sharing nothing more than a coincidence of setting. Thus, it is the intention of this thesis both to test the worth of 'public and private worlds' as an aid to analysis and to show that this particular, formal relationship is crucial to American fiction.

INTRODUCTION

It is the aim of this thesis to examine how American authors have, over the past nine decades, coped with the demands inherent in their choice of the novel as a form. No matter how closely an author may model his work on actual situations or societies, the very act of representation brings with it certain structural and artistic demands. The microcosm created within the pages of a novel is bounded by the dictates of its writer's artistic purpose, dependent for coherence on his deployment of literary techniques and peopled by characters who owe their existence to him. In formulating the phrase 'public and private worlds', the writer of this thesis had in mind the formal and structural characteristics common to all novels. 'Public worlds' may be defined as the environment in which characters have their existence. It comprises places, physical objects and that abstract area of tacitly agreed norms, society. Where individual characters or groups of characters are instrumental in translating these norms into pressures upon the individual, then they too are considered to be a part of the public world. 'Private worlds' may be defined as those aspects of the fiction seen as belonging to a specific character; his words, actions, thoughts and emotions, and all these taken together as his consciousness, are considered as the private world. To allow discussion of private worlds to be of some depth, it has on the whole been restricted to the central, most fully depicted characters in the works under consideration.

The phrase 'public and private worlds' is a dichotomy only in the sense that it refers to two defined, structural components of the novel. Public and private worlds are not assumed to be diametrically opposed, indeed this thesis is largely about the varied ways in which authors

relate them. They are, in almost every case, not merely inter-related but interdependent. At one extreme, in the naturalistic novel, we find private worlds utterly passive in face of the public world; at the other, in the works of Henry James, the private world is hyper-active, to the point where it may subsume the public world and become the environment of the character. The weighting given to each side of the dichotomy is considered and the resultant 'balance' described as the 'overall fictional reality'. This term takes into account the effect which the author's combination of public and private worlds has upon the reader and, whilst the aim of this thesis is primarily analytic, the overall fictional reality is evaluated on the grounds of its coherence, subtlety and artistic merits, all factors which emerge naturally from the application of the dichotomy.

This thesis performs a secondary function, that of testing the validity of the dichotomy as a critical tool. Critics who approach works of fiction with thematic, sociological, historical or categorial briefs run the risk of, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, 'finding in stones the sermons they already put there'. Those, on the other hand, who merely consider individual works and note recurrent figures or themes, run the equal risk of self-defeating diffuseness. It is hoped that by concentrating on two factors fundamental to the form, both dangers may be avoided. With public and private worlds as a 'premise', the argument cannot become diffuse. In this sense, the analysis is restricted, but the restriction is not so narrow that many important facets of a book must be left aside in pursuit of a delimiting hypothesis; indeed, as there are no aspects of a novel which lie outwith either 'public and private worlds' or the overall fictional reality, the analysis may claim to be comprehensive.

The balance between the two sides of the dichotomy is eloquent of both the author's artistic ability in deploying the form of the novel and of the effect he wishes to have on the sympathies of his readers. There are cases where the balance indicates that a certain effect is intended but where, as a result of artistic inadequacies, that effect is not produced. Rigorous analysis under the terms of the dichotomy reveals such artistic inconsistency. It is apparent that similarities in the balance between public and private worlds are indicative of similarities in the effect desired; in the first chapter, such similarities are used as a means to categorising certain novels as belonging to the Naturalistic tradition. In the third chapter, the dichotomy is used to show that James, Wharton and Lewis do not belong to the 'novelist of manners' category, for their novels are fundamentally different in basic structure. Where the actual 'public' world has exerted a discernible influence on the shape of the overall fictional reality, then such details as are judged to be relevant are included in the analysis. Discussion will not, however, stray into those dubious realms where works and their authors are seen only in terms of their particular age and it must be emphasised that the starting point in this study is always the published text itself.

The period under consideration was chosen because in its course, the relationship between public and private worlds undergoes some radical alterations, and, although no sort of linear pattern emerges, there is a marked change of emphasis between the earliest and the latest works discussed. In those lying between the extremes, the variations are sufficiently numerous to present considerable challenges to the validity of the dichotomy as a critical tool and to prove that the public and private world relationship is crucial to American fiction.

The first chapter, a study of the works of Norris, Crane, Dreiser and London, deals with novels whose overall fictional realities owe an obvious debt to the theories of Social Determinism and to the nascent science of psychology. The former, with its emphasis on man as the plaything of his environment, is largely responsible for the imbalance between public and private worlds evident in these works. Characters are reduced to passive, cardboard figures who move through a public world portrayed in minute, 'realistic' detail. The relationship between the two is implicit rather than explicit; environment is the cause and the actions of the characters the effect.

The second chapter is devoted to the works of Henry James. His concern with the novel as an art form is in stark contrast to the approach of the authors considered in the first chapter, who merely seized on the novel as a convenient vehicle for their theoretical enthusiasms. It is significant that James's preoccupation with the formal characteristics of the novel should have led him to give the private world the dominating role. The individual sensibility is the active interpreter of the public world and the prime factor in the structure of the overall fictional reality. In Chapter III the works of Edith Wharton and Sinclair Lewis are seen, in spite of certain important differences in technique, to be attempts to condemn actual societies through the medium of fiction. In striving to encompass those actual worlds within their fictional realities, both authors were forced to give the public world precedence and the private worlds of their characters came, inevitably, to be related to that world in more overt, less convincing ways and to suffer a certain loss of depth. Chapter IV deals with The Great Gatsby, a work which proves that it is possible to attack an actual society without adversely affecting the artistic merit of the overall fictional reality.

Chapter V examines novels written by a variety of authors over a period of twenty-five years. All these novels are set in Hollywood and it is argued that this unique, actual setting has a discernible effect on the structure of the overall fictional reality in those books using it as a public world. Chapters VI and VII, devoted to the works of William Faulkner, show that formal complexity need not depend upon the private world being given priority. Faulkner dictates the dimensions of his public world, physical, historical and psychological, and uses the consequent freedom of invention both to expand his complex vision of that world and to explore the possible structures of fictional reality. His works are a singular instance of the public world being given the dominating role without the structure of the overall fictional reality suffering any diminution in subtlety or coherence.

The contemporary authors considered in the final chapter of this thesis are alive to popular psychological theory but they do not, like the Naturalists, allow it to dictate the finished shape of their fictional realities. Where the earlier writers grasped the theory by its externals and overlaid it with a thin veil of fiction, the later writers use the theories as an adjunct to highly complex literary forms, whose base, like that of James, is the private world. Indeed, those such as John Barth and Vladimir Nabokov, are intent on exploring the possibilities of the novel as form, eschewing the Naturalist's desire to affect their readership's attitudes to social and moral issues and turning the novel into an attack on the critical complacency of the reader. One might even go so far as to say that the form has become an end in itself, not merely the means to 'the revelation of character' as it was for James.

It would appear that where an author is intent on using the form of the novel to comment on an actual public world, then the balance between 'reported' public and imagined private worlds is marked by an abasement of purely artistic aims. Where aesthetic considerations are uppermost, the finished work is more coherently and effectively structured and can, should the author so wish, also be made to comment implicitly on actual worlds. Phenomena from the 'real' world have been introduced into this thesis only where the text under consideration warranted it. There has been no attempt to stray into socio-historical realms via the author's temporal, social or geographical context. In life as well as in literature, the environment and the psychology of the individual are related in many complex, interesting ways, but the intention of this thesis is to examine how that relationship has been represented over the last ninety years in America. With analysis, not induction, as the aim, it is possible to discuss individual texts without reference to the regional or ethnic status of their writers. It is clear that Faulkner is a Southern writer and to compare him with Northern, Eastern or Western writers would undoubtedly be an interesting exercise, were one concerned with the cultural background of the author and its effect on the fictions they write.

The intention of this thesis is less specific. That it has no pretensions to being a definitive survey of American literature from 1885-1975 is indicated by the omission of Hemingway, Dos Passos and other writers who made significant formal innovations. The books discussed are a varied, if a far from representative, cross-section. The dichotomy is applied to groups of novels, ranging from the works of a single author to those of authors sharing an approach to the structuring of the overall fictional reality; from the works of authors attempting to write propaganda and fiction simultaneously to those of authors sharing

nothing more than their choice of setting. It is hoped that by challenging the validity and applicability of the chosen terms whilst, at the same time, concentrating on modern American novels, it has been proved that the dichotomy is valid, that the relationship between public and private worlds is crucial in American fiction and that the conjunction of the two is a rewarding one.

1890
1891
1892
1893
1894
1895

CHAPTER ONE

Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London

CHAPTER ONE

Save, perhaps, in the factual realms of natural science, the analytic approach is fraught with many difficulties. Foremost of these is the danger that the slightest nuance of bias in an initial premise may expand at every subsequent step to produce a gross, though often unobtrusive, distortion in the conclusions drawn. The literary historian is very vulnerable in this respect, for he deals not only with such 'facts' of social science as can be adduced from documentary sources, but also with fictional artefacts whose relationship to the 'reality' suggested by the former is an unquantifiable amalgam of imaginative effort, personal predilection and literary craftsmanship. Faced by such complexity, the tendency to seek simple links between the historical and the literary, and so to find one's initial premises in accord with the facts and consistent with one's conclusions, is ever present. This tendency might best be described as deterministic hindsight, the eager acceptance of a perspective in which social cause and literary effect appear to be related in overt ways, as accessible to easy analysis as they are to convincing synthesis. The fundamental flaw in this perspective is that it entails regarding works of literature not so much as attempts to create coherent fictional realities, but more as a response to some external 'reality', which is itself amenable to dissection.

It would be naïve to look on authors as an ivory-tower elite, cut off from their society by some unique, inspired disposition; but this is not the alternative viewpoint to deterministic hindsight. This chapter, dealing with novels written between 1890 and 1910, will attempt to reach conclusions primarily on the basis of the

texts themselves, whilst taking into account those contemporary influences and preoccupations evident within the works. Although the 'public and private worlds' dichotomy is an analytical tool, it avoids the danger outlined above by concentrating on the structural components of the novel form. Contemporary notions about man and his relationship to his environment are of considerable salience in the works discussed here; such salience is not a presumption informing the analysis, but a fact emerging from it. Examination of certain works by Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Jack London reveals fictional realities whose structures are sufficiently alike to warrant the adjective 'naturalistic' being applied to them. It will be argued that the manner in which the public world is portrayed in these works, together with recurrent types of character, recurrent balances between public and private worlds and recurrent terminology, all point to an infusion of Social Deterministic and evolutionary theory. The argument will not, however, enter those realms in which society and literature can be made to sing in glorious harmony only through the interventions of that potentially most tone-deaf of orchestrators, the latter-day literary historian.

In Harvests of Change, American Literature 1865-1945¹, Jay Martin maintains that the American author of the last two decades of the nineteenth-century was also a species of orchestrator, feeling himself called upon to give shape and meaning to the confusions inherent in a rapidly-changing society. Some writers, according to Mr Martin, responded to the challenge by making the city, that new and ever more troubling phenomenon, into a metaphor for human existence, in hopes that by so rendering facts as fiction they were

"allowing their contemporaries to adjust to it"². Others were, "proclaiming the predicament of Everyman by delineating their own sense of lostness"³, whilst yet another group were writing novels which:

Providing the stable conventions of literary form and thereby offering control over experience, ... helped Americans not merely to accept but to direct change in this age of confusion. By ordering change, these books made it meaningful; by preserving tradition where all traditional values seemed to be abrogated, they gave Americans momentary respite from emotional and intellectual chaos. They manifested and helped define the social conscience that Americans were for the first time in their history developing.⁴

One might be led to conclude from such statements that the novelists of the 1880's and 1890's in America were men of great vision, capable of analysing the ills that beset their countrymen and creating fictional panaceas for them. Nor, apparently, were their audiences slow to respond to such patent remedies but, with remarkable insight, soon understood not only the nature of the cure but the nature of the maladies for which these paper pills were designed. Willing, informed patients, they reacted well to treatment and came, through the medium of fiction, to be reconciled with the complicated situation in which they found themselves. So neat a picture, framed with much historical fact and presented by Mr Martin in so unambiguous a fashion, is hard to reject. If, however, one turns, as is the intention in this chapter, to the works themselves and to the critical writings of their authors, one finds a less harmonious arrangement and, in the absence of the orchestrator, rejection becomes inevitable.

The balance which is struck between public and private worlds in novels of this period leaves one in little doubt as to the social, or 'public', concern underlying them. There is, however, scant evidence that any one of the writers to be considered had behind him a convinced desire to illuminate, shape or delineate in any organised way his contemporary social scene. In the majority of cases, the burden of generalising from the particular instances presented in the books rests with the reader and if, as Mr Martin would have us believe, readers of this period were themselves in a confused state, then it is difficult to understand how the novels could help them, save by allowing very 'momentary respite' in the form of distraction from the many vexed questions besetting them. As most of the novels take the form of 'exposés' of the worst excesses produced by capitalism and environment, the quality of this 'momentary respite' is itself open to doubt. Orthodox morality is, by implication, the standard against which the excesses are set and its presence serves to heighten the 'immoral' overtones of the actions in the stories; but, as again in the majority of cases, this standard is seen to be irrelevant to the situations portrayed, the reader is left in as great an ethical dilemma as the characters.

It is in the failure of most of these works to do more than present a picture of moral and social confusion that the strongest rebuttal of Mr Martin's argument lies. In the iconoclastic undertones of some of the books one can discern the seeds of his thesis, but little can be found that is positive enough to suggest a reformist, or even a constructive aim. As we shall see, there is a noticeable lack of coherence in the works themselves, a confusion as to the use of literary technique, ethical standpoint, thematic development

and, indeed, as to the very nature of the novel as a form. In this more, perhaps, than in any other respect, the writers of this period could be seen to be responding to their age; men not so much ahead as very much of their time, encountering, as novelists, the same difficulty as society in trying to accommodate new ideas within traditional forms.

Such inductions and speculations are outwith the scope of this present introduction for, as has been said, the focus of both this chapter and the thesis as a whole is the manner in which public and private worlds are handled in the books discussed. In the context of these particular works one must take into account the literary theory which underlies and operates so obviously within their fictional framework. It will be argued that this theory, with its pretensions to 'reportorial accuracy', has a severely delimiting effect, causing the books to be overburdened with details about the public world and militating against attempts to evoke the private worlds of characters who, as a result, are reduced to mere puppets of fate, shaped by environment and prey to baser instincts. Few writers of the time would appear to have successfully created a workable concept of fiction, capable of encompassing the new views of man's condition without loss of artistic merit. Many of their works emerge as awkward admixtures in which moral questions remain obscure, resolutions ambiguous and the orthodox aim of individual success survives exposés of the worst excesses committed in its name.

Frank Norris's essays on the role of the novelist, collectively entitled The Responsibilities of the Novelist⁵, although as bedevilled

by confused thinking and contradictions as his fictional realities, nevertheless provide valuable confirmation of the attitudes to fiction which study suggests are implicit in naturalistic novels. Norris's great concern is with the potential influence of the writer, an influence which he believes far outstrips that of the preacher or the magazine editor. In 'The Need of a Literary Conscience'⁽¹⁾, he makes a swingeing attack on the 'very large class of American novelists' whose chief interest is in the truth of sales figures rather than what he, somewhat ingenuously, calls Truth:

And truth in fiction is just as real and just as important as truth anywhere else. ...It is the thing that is one's own, the discovery of a suitable subject for fictitious narrative that has never yet been treated, and the conscientious study of that subject and the fair presentation of results.⁶

The emphasis which he here places on the novelty of subject-matter is significant and, in view of the many repetitions revealed by closer study of his works, ironical. Working from the assumption that the subject has a life of its own, which the writer merely transmits 'truthfully' to his readers, and equating 'suitability' with 'novelty', Norris seems to reject the idea that the writer is a creative artist, capable of forging his chosen material into whatever shape he pleased. His vision of the author is one of utter passivity. Even the subject is chosen by default, because the writer chances to stumble across something which has not

(1) All the essays were written between 1901 and 1903, after the publication of The Octopus (1901). They first appeared in various magazines and were collected and published under the above title after Norris's death in 1903.

been 'treated' before; one feels that he would have found some difficulty in reconciling this statement of his theory with the practice as seen in The Octopus (1901), for the book is not without its artistic and creative aspirations. Even the act of 'recognising' a subject is, in a sense, a creative one.

However, just as Norris seems to believe that truth is an incontestable and readily definable phenomenon so, in the same naïve fashion, he is prepared to accept that the role of the writer is nothing more complex than 'the presentation of results'. This view of fiction, with its pseudo-scientific overtones, clearly owes something to the influence of the French Naturalists, notably to that of Emile Zola. The extent of this influence is not easily defined, although its existence is incontrovertible. Lars Ahnebrink, in his book The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction, makes the following observations:

Turning from Zola to the American writers (Norris, Crane and Garland) we note a certain similarity in method. This does not necessarily imply that they learnt their techniques from French naturalism. It is also possible that the methods of American journalism and the scientific orientation of nineteenth-century European thought were as responsible as Zola or other naturalists for this technique. They were, however, like Zola, anxious to get the right atmosphere, the correct terms, the authentic details and the exact setting for their novels and stories.⁷

The relationship of Norris, Crane, London and Dreiser to American journalism will be discussed later. It is not quite clear why Mr Ahnebrink should suggest that the scientific orientation of European, as opposed to American, thought was in part responsible for the technique used in American naturalistic novels. One would

more readily have accepted the suggestion that this influence came to America via Zola and other French naturalists and that, if any scientific orientation directly affected the American writers, then it was that of Darwin and Spencer, whose theories were widely discussed at the time both in the newspapers and the magazines and were popularised in America by Fiske and Youmans.⁸

o
 Whatever its roots may be, and Mr Ahnebrink is less tentative about the French influence elsewhere in his book, the American naturalistic novel is a recognisable 'type', involving a particular balance between public and private worlds and having its fictional reality structured in a manner which owes less to the artistic powers and aspirations of its author than to the theoretical notions which it is designed to embody. Although it is not the intention of this chapter to establish finally that Crane, Norris and Dreiser were American naturalists, but merely to examine certain of their works which exhibit formal and thematic characteristics consistent with those of the naturalistic novel, some definition of naturalism is necessary. Richard M. Chase, in The American Novel and its Tradition, suggests that:

*
 Naturalism is a special case of realism. And although it is often identified with its interests in unusually sordid reality, it actually becomes a special case of realism by adhering to a necessitarian ideology. In aesthetic terms this ideology becomes a metaphor of fate and man's situation in the universe.⁹

o
 Ahnebrink, too, stresses the ideological basis of the genre, substituting the more appropriate label of 'determination' for Chase's 'necessitarian':

Realism is a manner and method of composition by which the author describes normal, average life in an accurate and truthful way. Naturalism, on the other hand, is a manner and method of composition by which an author portrays life as it is in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism. ...To a naturalist man can be explained in terms of the forces, usually heredity and environment, which operate upon him.¹⁰

These definitions accord with one's findings on reading the novels themselves. Repeatedly, we are faced by characters who are passive in face of their economically deprived environments. Their sole emotional release takes the form of sexual appetites or, as the authors would have it, 'baser instincts'. They cannot be credited with any great private resource for fear that this might allow blame to be shifted from the shoulders of the environment on to those of the individual, a shift which would be inconsistent with the underlying theory. This theory imposes a rigid framework on the structure of the overall fictional reality; technique is confined to a species of 'reportorial accuracy', character is restricted to responses to baser instincts or environment and the whole is burdened with a literary approach antipathetic to imaginative interventions by the author, save in limited and specialised ways.

Norris extols this approach in another of his collected essays, 'The Novel With A Purpose'. He claims that such a novel is the highest form of literature, it "proves something, draws conclusions from whole congeries of forces, social tendencies, race impulses, devotes itself not to the study of men but of man".¹¹ One can see that to translate this theory into practice would require the suppression of the private world, for eccentric individuals do not fit into this generalising scheme. The effect of so complex

and so theoretical an aspiration on the balance between public and private worlds may be seen in such novels as Blix, Vandover and the Brute and McTeague. Ever able to ignore nuances and complexities, Norris reduces what could, potentially, be an interweaving of the insights gained from readings in psychology, sociology and other nascent social sciences within a fictional framework, to a very limited portrayal of men as puppets of their instincts and their environments. Whilst pretending to give us no more than 'a fair presentation of results', Norris cannot avoid prejudicing his case by implying that the excesses we see in the novels contrast sharply with laudable, traditional moral existences. The embodiments of such moral worth are variously a good woman, a clean, blameless life, an appreciation of nature and financial success. The last is important, for The Octopus is designed to deprecate the inhumanities perpetrated in pursuit of this very goal and Norris's contention, in his critical writings, that the novel is a preaching instrument aimed at informing the upper classes of conditions amongst the lower would appear to be incompatible with the setting up of financial success as a desirable end. To do this is merely to confirm the moneyed reader in his ways. Money, or gold, is an obsession common to all his major characters and it is difficult to discern the social purpose behind what amounts to little more than an affirmation of the status quo. Theoretical aspirations have unfortunate effects not only on the artistic merits of the books he wrote, but also tend to lead to logical inconsistencies.

His handling of the third ideal, Nature, is no more subtle. Unlike such novelists as Mrs Gaskell, Norris makes no attempt to balance pictures of urban degradation with glimpses of a lost rural utopia;

he is content to seize on the most overtly romantic aspects of Nature to allow his solidly middle-class protagonists, such as Condy, to give vent to a wholesome platitude or two and to ensure that the inflated rhetoric, which runs through both his criticism and his fiction, has additional scope. His concept of the novelists's role, too, is bedevilled by confused thinking. In his fiction this confusion evinces itself in the equivocal moral stances, dubious interpretations made, or intended to be made, of various passages, mixed metaphors and ambiguous symbols. Whilst it would be quite simple to explain away every syllable of his small body of works in terms of one or other of the multitude of notions and forces at large in the contemporary world, one must conclude that the greatest force was confusion, and to say this is tantamount to saying nothing.

To return to his statement about Truth in fiction, the belief which he here betrays in the accessibility of this concept, in its potential for rendition in black-and-white, might be said, in Mr Martin's terms, to reflect a search for absolute values in a time of confusion. It would, perhaps, be more illuminating to say that it is but one instance of a profound yet brash naïveté which renders Norris's written words incapable of withstanding close scrutiny. Were one to analyse this quotation alone, one would be left to question how he hopes to reconcile the subjective element required 'to make it one's own' with the demand that the whole be a masterpiece of objectivity, what criteria he considers important when seeking a 'suitable' subject and, finally, what distinction, if any, he would make between fact and fiction. In asking such questions, one is not being so unjust as to turn a

cynical, late twentieth-century eye upon Norris and his theories. Judged by the standards set by such contemporary writers as James and Conrad, Norris's singular lack of subtlety, coherence and craftsmanship becomes evident even to his most ardent apologist, who will cite 'energy', 'vigour' and 'dramatic sense' in an attempt to redress the balance of opinion.

Not by arrogance, nor by assumption, nor by achievement of the world's wisdom, shall you be made worthy of the place of high command. But it (leadership in literature) will come to you, if it comes at all, because you shall have kept yourself young and humble and pure in heart, and so unspoiled and unwearied and unjaded that you shall find joy in the mere rising of the sun, a wholesome, sane delight in the sound of the wind at night, a pleasure in the hills in the evening, shall see God in a little child and a whole religion in a brooding bird.¹²

This somewhat hackneyed passage brings to a close 'The Need Of A Literary Conscience', an essay basing its arguments on the size of the novel-reading public, the author's consequent potential for corruption, the expectations of journalistic truth and the concrete nature of truth itself. One's growing suspicion that Norris had but a slight grasp of the theories with which he juggled is here confirmed; not only has he succeeded in reducing the choice of subject to the new and the suitable, but he has also diminished the part played by the author in the finished representation to something relying more on personal, moral and, therefore, less tangible, qualities than on artistic merit, subtlety or the ability to employ the form of the novel. The above is a flight of rhetoric, almost biblical in tone, and a prescription of little worth to the aspiring Great Novelist. It might, however, have persuaded the readers of Harper's that here was that Great Novelist, a man of conventional religious and sentimental vision, reposing

faith in God and in Nature, a believer in Truth and in America. Had Norris been alive today, one suspects that he might have found his *métier* not in the writing of literature but in the writing of advertising copy, or Presidential speeches.

It is interesting that so little is said in The Responsibilities of the Novelist about the aesthetic demands of the practice. From reading Norris's books, one concludes that the matter is of slight significance amid a welter of other concerns. Blix, one of his earlier works, is, in the words of James Hart's introduction to A Novelist in the Making, "a self-centredly boyish book, earnest about morality and gentlemanly standards, and tintured with a patronising juvenile snobbishness".¹³ The hero, Condy, is a reporter and aspiring novelist who appears to share Norris's admiration for the original, "Original - why it's new as paint! It's - it's - Travis, I'll make a story of this that will be copied in every paper between the two oceans".¹⁴ He spends his days searching for 'background' and 'good yarns' with which to manufacture copy or stories, finding time in between to fall in love with a fine young woman who is spirited enough to give up society and all its wiles in favour of adventuring about the countryside and studying medicine, and also to indulge in some of his baser instincts, notably a passion for gambling which 'rides him like a hag' until he changes mounts, in favour of the superb Blix, discovering that "the love of her had made a man of him. ...In those two months he had grown five years; he was more masculine, more virile".¹⁵

We are, undoubtedly, intended to take Condy seriously, although when he goes into paroxysms of delight over the very literary

techniques which are at the same moment being used to describe his delight, we may find it difficult. The thing verges on parody. There is little to suggest that either Blix or Condy possesses a private world, for throughout the book Norris employs a highly descriptive, didactic narrative which renders people and the objects around them of much the same order. Indeed, we are specifically told that Blix has no private world:

You did not expect to find her introspective. You felt sure that her mental life was not at all the result of thoughts and reflections germinated from within, but rather impressions and sensations that came to her from without.¹⁶

Condy is similarly constituted, distinguishable from Blix only in his tendency to depravity. In the end, the pair are transformed into comprehensive Emblems, in a passage which again denies them any claim to private, 'mental lives':

All unknowingly, they were a Romance in themselves. ... They were all for the immediate sensation; they did not think - they felt. The intellect was dormant. ...Just to be young was an exhilaration; and everything was young with them; the day was young, the country was young, and the civilisation to which they belonged, teeming there upon the green, Western fringes of the continent, was young and heady and tumultuous with the boisterous, red blood of a new race. ...Life was better than Literature.¹⁷

It seems that the reader is intended to abstract from the fall and redemption of Condy, and from his ultimate exuberance, a Moral, applicable not only to himself but, after the fashion of Gatsby, to the nation, "they turned their faces...to a new life, to the East where lay the Nation".¹⁸ Unlike Gatsby, however, Condy does not emerge from the book as part of a carefully constructed fictional

reality and the phrase is unrelated to what has gone before. Throughout the novel, the central figure exists in a sort of no-man's land between character and symbol, alternately loaded with significance, in such passages as the above, and stripped of it in those parts where, his private world being denied existence, he becomes much like any other aspect of the environment. He does not have the ability to re-structure the public world according to his private lights. The 'colloquial' dialogue is more evidence of Norris's 'going in for' accuracy of details than a reflection of the operations of Condy's sensibility and, on the few occasions when he does experience intense emotion, the emphasis is shifted from the emotion itself to the underlying physiological activity:

Then, as his tired eyes closed at last, occurred the strange trick of picture-making that the over-taxed brain plays upon the retina. A swift series of pictures of the day's doings began to whirl through rather than before the pupils of his shut eyes.¹⁹

Private worlds being relegated to an inferior position, the public world in this and other works, becomes paramount. It is not, however, treated in such a way as to make it warrant its dominating role. There are many excellent passages of description in Blix; the dockland and Chinatown are realised in minute detail, so that reader and character 'see' the same scene; but neither, in terms of the overall fictional reality, derives anything from it. In McTeague the public world is used to greater effect, the constantly changing scene in Polk Street giving substance and meaning to the simple life of the dentist. When he gazes out of his window we are aware that he is a part of the scene, as likely to be in the midst of the throng as watching it from the sidelines.

Day after day, McTeague saw the same panorama unroll itself. The bay window of his Dental Parlor was for him a vantage point from which he watched the world go past. On Sundays, however, all was changed. As he stood in the bay window after finishing his beer, wiping his lips and looking out into the street, McTeague was conscious of a difference. Nearly all the stores were closed. No wagons passed. A few people hurried up and down the sidewalks, dressed in cheap Sunday finery.²⁰

Character and descriptive passages are more successfully linked here. Being a man of very limited intelligence, McTeague responds to his environment in a rudimentary fashion, neither abstracting meaning from or generalising about it, and we can accept 'McTeague saw' as an adequate evocation of his none-too-active private world responding to an equally restricted public one. It is, perhaps, to this element of restriction that one may attribute the greater success of McTeague in literary terms. The public world of Polk Street is not merely described but it is peopled with various figures which, although individually ludicrous and often clichéd, collectively complement the activity of the street and give the whole picture greater depth. They lend a coherence to the structure of the overall fictional reality which is sorely lacking in Blix.

The recurrent animal imagery and the repeated references to gold might be expected to further tighten the overall structure. However, this is not the case. At one level, the book is about a fateful relationship between two people who, attractive enough individually, combined merely emphasise and exacerbate each others faults. Trina, initially beautiful and 'regal', latterly sluttish and obsessive about money, stirs McTeague's 'baser instincts' and, their indulgence legalised by marriage, drives him to perversion and brutality. Circumstances conspire against them and, side by side, they descend the Darwinian ladder to the most bestial of levels. Having murdered Trina, McTeague

becomes a sort of fugitive animal, taking some solace from a renewed contact with Nature but finally suffering a suitably melodramatic fate. The manner in which Norris chooses to express the themes of cupidity and bestial lust is sorely at odds with the minutely realised portrait of Polk Street. Although one appreciates that he is intent on emphasising the disparity between the ordinary life of the streets and the forces of degradation at work in man, by making his thesis so obtrusive, he disintegrates his fictional reality. As McTeague works on the teeth of the unconscious Trina, the animal in him is aroused and the reader is faced with the following:

It was a crisis - a crisis that had arisen all in an instant; a crisis for which he was totally unprepared. ...Within him a second self, another better McTeague arose with the brute; both were strong, with the huge, crude strength of the man himself. The two were at grapples. There in the cheap shabby Dental Parlors a dreadful struggle began. It was the old battle, as old as the world, wide as the world - the sudden panther leap of the animal, lips drawn, fangs aflash, hideous, monstrous, not to be resisted, and the simultaneous arousing of the other man, the better self that cries, 'Down, down', without knowing why; that grips the monster; that fights to strangle it, to thrust it down and back.²¹

The epic overtones of this supposed mental struggle combine with reminders of the mundane background to produce an effect bordering on the comic. Norris's technique is counter-productive. By so inflating the language he divorces the psychological battle from the character, dislocating it from the private world so far successfully portrayed and isolating it on the high and windy plain where his thesis resides. Lest any vestige of ambiguity should survive, Norris puts the events into their theoretical context a few lines farther on:

Below the fine fabric of all that was good in him ran the foul stream of hereditary evil, like a sewer. The vices and sins of his father, and of his father's father, to the third and fourth and five hundredth generation, tainted him.²²

Not content with allowing the actions of his characters to stand as dramatic embodiments of hereditary evil, not content with even descriptions of these actions in terms which leave no doubt as to their theoretical basis, Norris seems to feel impelled to state the theory itself. The effect of all this on the structure of the overall fictional reality is immediately apparent. It is unfortunate that Norris is so enrapt with the theory, for in the spaces between the rhetoric there are a few undeveloped suggestions that the characters have private worlds more profound than those demanded by their passive roles. We see that McTeague desires Trina and wishes to marry her, but we also glimpse an uncertainty in his mind as to whether, having got her, he really wants her; when she ceases to be an unattainable ideal, she loses a little of her attraction and gradually becomes anathema to him, "She was a perpetual irritation to him. She annoyed him because she was so small and so prettily made, so invariably correct and precise. Her avarice incessantly harassed him. Her industry was a constant reproach to him."²³ In this observation are the seeds of a profound analysis of close relationships, and analysis more profound and telling than any relying on pseudo-scientific theory for insight. But, because McTeague and Trina are intended to exemplify hereditary evil, such promising imaginative ideas are neglected. Trina, too, has unexplored complexities; her affection for McTeague positively deepens when he is brutal with her, her love of money takes a curious and sensual form, driving her to roll about amongst her gold on a bed, and it is hinted that her feelings on turning the starving McTeague

away for the last time are exceedingly mixed. Again, these touches, 'nice and realistic' had Norris but realised it, are left far in the wake of the main, didactic purpose. The balance between public and private worlds is but slightly redressed by these glimpses of 'mental life'; ultimately it hovers about that point where environment and hereditary evil coincide. That this point is supposedly situated within a private world seems scarcely relevant, for the aim is to show that such private worlds are the creation of the public one, the direct results of environmental influences acting on psyches passive not only in their confrontation with their surroundings, but in their subjection to baser instincts.

Only in the closing chapters does the fictional reality escape from the theoretical straight-jacket. Fine flights of rhetoric become fewer, descriptive passages, freed from the restrictions of Polk Street and now relating to rapidly changing scenes, take on a new subtlety; symbolic overtones become implicit rather than baldly stated and the dentist himself, divorced from his shaping environment, becomes more articulate and more credible. Against the backdrop of a searing, white, waterless no-man's land, the figure of McTeague, surrounded by ill-gotten and now irrelevant gains, alone save for the mule and the canary, stands out in high relief. Greed and bestiality are of diminished importance in the face of death. Character and symbol transcend at last their Darwinian limitations and take on a universal significance. McTeague is the archetypal outcast, fleeing from a fear he cannot define across an unpeopled landscape to come face to face with his Nemesis. The success of these closing scenes may in part be attributed to the absence of underscoring. Norris leaves us with a vision in which everything is implicit, a vision perhaps at odds with the rest of the novel and unwarranted by the structure of the

overall fictional reality, but which is nevertheless telling:

As McTeague rose to his feet, he felt a pull at his right wrist; something held it fast. Looking down, he saw that Marcus in that last struggle had found strength to handcuff their wrists together. Marcus was dead now; McTeague was locked to the body. All about him, vast, interminable, stretched the measureless leagues of Death Valley. McTeague remained stupidly looking around him, now at the distant horizon, now at the ground, now at the half-dead canary chittering feebly in its little gilt prison.²⁴

This piece of ironic symbolism shows that, on the few occasions when the narrative eludes the clutches of Norris's broad, theoretical preoccupations, it may achieve considerable merit.

Such occasions are few in McTeague and even fewer in The Octopus, the novel in which Norris took breadth of significance as his major aim. Individual passages may be singled out as examples of excellent writing, but the overall structure of the book works against artistic achievement. When Norris conceives of a theme in terms of its social relevance, he seems to abandon literary concerns in pursuit of that relevance, ignoring any demands imposed on him by his chosen form in his desire to make the wider concern absolutely explicit. The Octopus was designed as the first of a trilogy centred around wheat, its production, its distribution and its consumption. The subject was topical, a hybrid of the old agrarian and the new industrial elements, the source of many a fortune made on the stock-market and the focus of several contemporary magazine articles. There is a marked similarity between Norris's handling of the theme and that of Ray Stannard Baker who, writing in 'McClure's Magazine' of November 1899, also divided the matter into 'The Sources and Volume

overall fictional reality, but which is nevertheless telling:

As McTeague rose to his feet, he felt a pull at his right wrist; something held it fast. Looking down, he saw that Marcus in that last struggle had found strength to handcuff their wrists together. Marcus was dead now; McTeague was locked to the body. All about him, vast, interminable, stretched the measureless leagues of Death Valley. McTeague remained stupidly looking around him, now at the distant horizon, now at the ground, now at the half-dead canary chattering feebly in its little gilt prison.²⁴

This piece of ironic symbolism shows that, on the few occasions when the narrative eludes the clutches of Norris's broad, theoretical preoccupations, it may achieve considerable merit.

Such occasions are few in McTeague and even fewer in The Octopus, the novel in which Norris took breadth of significance as his major aim. Individual passages may be singled out as examples of excellent writing, but the overall structure of the book works against artistic achievement. When Norris conceives of a theme in terms of its social relevance, he seems to abandon literary concerns in pursuit of that relevance, ignoring any demands imposed on him by his chosen form in his desire to make the wider concern absolutely explicit. The Octopus was designed as the first of a trilogy centred around wheat, its production, its distribution and its consumption. The subject was topical, a hybrid of the old agrarian and the new industrial elements, the source of many a fortune made on the stock-market and the focus of several contemporary magazine articles. There is a marked similarity between Norris's handling of the theme and that of Ray Stannard Baker who, writing in 'McClure's Magazine' of November 1899, also divided the matter into 'The Sources and Volume

of Production', 'The Machinery and Methods of Distribution' and 'The Rapidity of Consumption'.⁽¹⁾ It may be idle to speculate whether or not Norris was indebted to Baker for the original idea and the basic design of his trilogy, although, from his criticism, one gathers that the act of 'making a subject one's own' does not rule out cribbing from other sources.

o
Lars Ahnebrink, in his book, goes a long way towards establishing that Norris's debt to Zola went far beyond the theoretical realm into that of literal transcription and the replication of characters and incidents, "In the quotations we recognize the same rhythm, the same seething and rearing life of the place; both authors use similar phraseology and metaphors".²⁵ He suggests too that the resemblance between The Octopus (1901), based on the struggle between the railroad and the California farmers which culminated in the Mussel Slough incident of 1880, and Zola's novel Germinal (1885), dealing with the struggle between mine workers and owners, have a great deal more in common than the theme of the oppressed minority confronting a formidable opponent.²⁶ Presley and Etienne, both young, observant outsiders, open their respective books by travelling about talking to the workers, both are influenced by anarchists and both finally leave as disappointed men; each novel contains a splendid dinner party scene which contrasts sharply with the plight of poorer characters and both books open with a dramatic personae and a map

(1) Other similarities include the observation that the ranches were made to feel a part of the whole by the introduction of the 'ticker-tape' (The Octopus, p.36), an observation, like that about the 'rice-eating Chinamen' acquiring a taste for wheat, phrased in an almost identical way. Both Norris and Baker talk of 'tides of wheat', Annixter seems to embody the sort of wheat farmer described by Baker, "a wide reader, sometimes a thinker, always a politician", and the illustration accompanying the article, of a man in the hold of a grain-ship, is strongly reminiscent of S. Beherman's unlabeled end in just such a hold.

of the area. Ahnebrink's arguments are convincing and Norris's desire to 'model' himself so closely on Zola may, when coupled with his attempt to make the novel into a 'preaching' instrument, largely explain why the fictional reality is so lacking in coherence and integrity.

The book's 'epic' aspirations lead it into gross inflations of language and shallow characterisations, whilst the underlying literary theory demands much 'realistic' detail and technical terminology. Wheat is translated into a vast, Homeric metaphor for and resounding symbol of all manner of things, so that even at the symbolic level there is a marked lack of coherence and control. Norris's choice of the epic mould is scarcely surprising, for in another of his collected essays, 'A Neglected Epic', he has already, as it were, prepared the ground by deploring the fact that no epic has emerged from the conquest of the West, something he regards as the last 'lurch of civilisation', the completion of a circle begun centuries before in China, "Civilisation has circled the globe and come back to its starting point, the vague and mysterious East".²⁷ He goes on to say that every other step along the way has been marked by the 'production of literature, peculiar, distinctive, excellent', but that the sole monument to this last movement is 'the dime novel and nothing better'.

Norris's awareness of what he considered to be a 'public' need for an epic does as great a disservice to his structuring of The Octopus as Darwinian theories do to his other works for, in every case, the non-literary preoccupations work against the creation of a coherent fictional reality. In so far as this epic may be said to have a central figure, then it is that of Presley, himself the would-be

writer of an epic who, like Condy, shares a number of opinions about literary craft with his creator and is put in the situation of a character in an epic who is writing an epic. His wish to portray life just as he sees it, "through no medium of personality or temperament",²⁸ mirrors the reportorial accuracy evidently attempted in the novel itself. Such correlations between character and author are not exploited in a meaningful way, save that any autobiographical implications may be assumed to reflect to Norris's credit. The reader of American literature will have to wait some time before such coincidences become clever, witting devices affecting the nature of the reader's role in relation to the book in which they occur.

One expected to find him nervous, introspective, to discover that his mental life was not all the result of impressions and sensations that came to him from without, but rather of thoughts and reflections germinating from within. Though morbidly sensitive to changes in his physical surroundings, he would be slow to act upon such sensations, would not prove impulsive, not because he was sluggish, but because he was merely irresolute. It could be seen that he was of that sort who avoid evil through taste, lack of decision, and want of opportunity. His temperament was that of the poet; when he told himself that he had been thinking, he deceived himself. He had on such occasions, been only brooding.²⁹

'One' would have needed to be a quite remarkable observer to have gleaned all this from merely looking at the man. When we recall how Henry James, in introducing us to Christopher Newman, uses the conceit of an observer to show how inappropriate ideas of character born of the casual glance may be, we realise just how unsubtle Norris is in his use of the same conceit. Where James, as we shall see in the next chapter, employs the appearance of the character as a means

to guiding the reader away from assumption based on notions of 'type' and into the deeper levels of the private world, Norris, in his eagerness to give us the clue to Presley's sensibility, makes unrealistic assumptions about the eloquence of his appearance, substituting explicit narrative statements for James's subtle implications.

This is, however, at least an attempt to delineate the private world of Presley, a world which is given a vital role in the structure of the overall fictional reality. Presley, the outsider and the poet, is the only character in the novel who goes any way towards restructuring the public world according to his personal lights. It is unfortunate, therefore, to find Norris once again resorting to what can only be described as a 'formula' for characterisation, namely, 'people who react to their surroundings are not introspective and those who do not so react are introspective'. We may recall that Condy and Blix were described in this way. This reduction of psychological insights to slight, formulaic patterns of words is eloquent only of the low priority Norris attaches to such matters, and of the high priority he allots to environment. As the book progresses, we are increasingly aware that the interaction between Presley's private world and the public one is far less important than the attendant mass of words. Thus, Presley the poet and Norris the narrator at various points in the book use identical images and the author, who initially gives us an at best equivocal portrait of Presley's potential, later comes to identify with his perspective, a fusion which is scarcely calculated. Were we to accept as justified Presley's ultimate rejection of the 'epic' then, by extension, we should be forced to see Norris's novel too

as an exercise in futility. The coincidence of points of view is clearly unintentional and is but one example of a marked strain of laxness in Norris's approach to the business of writing.

It was noted above that identical phrases were used to describe the states of mind of two characters. Whilst this repetition might be justified by devious argument, it would be more difficult to explain away the following 'coincidences':

In the absence of June, Victorine the cook went through the agony of waiting on the table, very nervous and embarrassed in her clean calico gown and her starched apron. ...She stood off at a distance from the table making sudden awkward dabs at it. ...In her excess of politeness she kept up a constant murmur as she attended their wants. ...At last when she had set the nerves of all of them in a jangle, she was dismissed to the kitchen and retired with a gasp of unspeakable relief.³⁰

and:

In the absence of Victorine, Maggie waited on the table, very uncomfortable in her one good dress and stiff white apron. She stood off from the table, making awkward dabs at it from time to time. In her excess of deference she developed a clumsiness that was beyond all expression. ...and, at last, when she had set even Travis's placid nerves in a jangle, was dismissed to the kitchen and retired with a gasp of unspeakable relief.³¹

The first passage occurs in Vandover and the Brute, written whilst Norris was at Harvard (1890-4) but published posthumously in 1914, and the second is from Blix, published in 1899. The following passages occur in Vandover and McTeague (1899) respectively:

as an exercise in futility. The coincidence of points of view is clearly unintentional and is but one example of a marked strain of laxness in Norris's approach to the business of writing.

It was noted above that identical phrases were used to describe the states of mind of two characters. Whilst this repetition might be justified by devious argument, it would be more difficult to explain away the following 'coincidences':

In the absence of June, Victorine the cook went through the agony of waiting on the table, very nervous and embarrassed in her clean calico gown and her starched apron. ...She stood off at a distance from the table making sudden awkward dabs at it. ...In her excess of politeness she kept up a constant murmur as she attended their wants. ...At last when she had set the nerves of all of them in a jangle, she was dismissed to the kitchen and retired with a gasp of unspeakable relief.³⁰

and:

In the absence of Victorine, Maggie waited on the table, very uncomfortable in her one good dress and stiff white apron. She stood off from the table, making awkward dabs at it from time to time. In her excess of deference she developed a clumsiness that was beyond all expression. ...and, at last, when she had set even Travis's placid nerves in a jangle, was dismissed to the kitchen and retired with a gasp of unspeakable relief.³¹

The first passage occurs in Vandover and the Brute, written whilst Norris was at Harvard (1890-4) but published posthumously in 1914, and the second is from Blix, published in 1899. The following passages occur in Vandover and McTeague (1899) respectively:

Mrs Wade, Ida's mother, who gave lessons in hand painting, had an exhibit there they were interested to find; a bunch of yellow poppies painted on velvet and framed in gilt. They stood before it some little time hazarding their opinions and then moved from one picture to another; Ellis bought a catalogue and made it a duty to find the title of every picture.³²

and:

Trina's cousin Selina, who gave lessons in hand-painting at two bits an hour, generally had an exhibit on the walls which they were interested to find. It usually was a bunch of yellow poppies painted on black velvet and framed in gilt. They stood before it some little time hazarding their opinions, and then moved on slowly from one picture to another. Trina had McTeague buy a catalog and made a duty of finding the title of every picture.³³

It would appear that not only characterisation may be reduced to a formula. Figures belonging to the middle-class must take part in one sort of vignette, those of the lower in another. The above passages are sufficiently dissimilar, even in their spelling, to suggest that Norris was aware that he was using the same material in different contexts. Such repetitions of peripheral scenes may seem a slight matter, but it is symptomatic of an approach in which nice, 'realistic' touches are used to fill out a framework supplied by naturalistic philosophy, Zola and Social Determinism. In spite of his repeated emphasis on the endless variety of life, and hence of subject-matter, Norris's writing is prone to repetitions, thematic and stylistic, which leave the reader with an impression of hasty disregard for the niceties of 'good' writing in the pursuit of various theses.

The 'epic' pretensions of The Octopus lead to an exaggeration of the faults evident in works of more restricted scope. S Beherman, for example, is described no less than three times in identical terms.⁽¹⁾

(1) Frank Norris, The Octopus, Riverside Press (Boston, 1958), p.46-47 p.236 and p.444.

Other repetitions, especially those relating to the Wheat and the Octopus, may be justified on the grounds that they mark the continuation and development of the symbolic structure in the book. As we shall see, however, even in this area there is a lack of coherent patterning. Characters, in this epic, are drawn with even broader sweeps of the pen, 'types' become archetypes and the *dramatis personae* resolves itself into an all-too predictable pattern. S Beherman, caricature capitalist complete with devilish glint and dirty laugh, comes to a suitably sticky end after much machination; Hilma Tree is, of course, the innocent earth-mother, her plenitude and fecundity so marked that they even make an impression on the misogynistic Annixter, and Shelgrim, the railway boss, emerges as, "a gigantic figure in end-of-century finance, a product of circumstances, an inevitable result of conditions, characteristic, typical, symbolic of ungovernable forces".³³

This description is a perfect example of the forces at work in the novel as a whole. Norris is trying to cope with characters who must be shown not only as products of their environments, but also as emblems of a drama being enacted in the wider, 'public' world, the clash between the individual and the forces of capitalism. When these needs are coupled with the desire to portray the public world in poetic terms, in terms of the cycle of the seasons and the powers of the elements, one can appreciate why the characters are individually lacking in private worlds, why, in spite of many excellent passages of realistic description, the structure of the overall fictional reality is so sorely lacking in coherence and why the ultimate resolution is so ambiguous.

Only three characters make any impact on the reader. Although Annixter belongs with the rest, he is singled out for deeper treatment, both in his relationship with Hilma and in his reactions to the injustices of the railroad. We see him as a man morbidly obsessed with the state of his stomach, given to eating prunes and patent medicines, an admirer of Dickens who respects Presley, his literary mentor, a hard-headed economist and inveterate arguer and a character singularly alive by contrast to the rest. The flowering of his love for Hilma, itself realised in excessively sentimental terms, makes his demise more telling than that of the other mere cyphers.

Vanamee, the focal point of a semi-mystical strain in the book, is also remarkable, not so much as the result of careful characterisation, but of his eccentricity. He hovers on the edge of the narrative, apparently in the throes of some metaphysical crisis, rounding up his sheep and his thoughts with the help of Presley and a priest, until at last we see that this Ishmael has strayed into the text in order to carry its final message:

Life out of death, eternity rising from out dissolution. There was the lesson. Angele was not the symbol but the proof of immortality. The seed dying, rotting and corrupting in the earth; rising again in life unconquerable, and in immaculate purity. ...Why had he not the knowledge of God? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.³⁴

Not only is this 'lesson' an awkward admixture of the Christian and the pagan, it is also very difficult to relate to the rest of the book. How does this bear upon all the dirty double-dealing that has gone on between farmers and railroad? The sordid politicking that has dominated the story is neither excused nor justified by

this, and the imaginative leap required to make any meaningful connection between all the characters lying slaughtered and the re-birth of the wheat, which will presumably drive subsequent generations to similar profit seeking self-destruction, is too great. That so peripheral and so fey a character should be cast as the unifying link between the multitude of threads which go to make up this loosely-woven epic seems ill-judged. Vanamee's leap from wings to centre stage is as sudden and as unconvincing as the transformation of Blix and Condy into symbols. Both events point to a less-than-sure grasp of where the fictional reality as a whole is going.

In a way, the third outstanding character, Presley, has prepared us for Vanamee's lesson. As puissant poet, he is all-too ready to translate everything he sees into epic terms and is very much alive to the huge symbolic signifiante of the wheat:

The whole gigantic sweep of the San Joquin expanded, Titanic, before the eye of the man, flagellated with heat, quivering and shimmering under the sun's red eye. ...It was the season after the harvest, and the great earth, the mother, after its period of reproduction, its pains of labour, delivered of the fruits of its loins, slept the sleep of exhaustion, the infinite repose of the Colossus, benignant, eternal, strong, the nourisher of nations, the feeder of the entire world.

Ha! There it was, his epic, his inspiration, his West, his thundering progression of hexameters. A sudden uplift, a sense of exhilaration, of physical exaltation appeared abruptly to sweep Presley from his feet. ...He was dizzied, stunned, stupefied, his morbid, super-sensitive mind reeling, drunk with the intoxication of mere immensity. Stupendous ideas for which there were no names drove headlong through his brain. Terrible, formless shapes, vague figures, gigantic, monstrous, distorted whirled at a gallop through his imagination.³⁵

As the earth appears to be alternately male, a Colossus with loins, and female, the other, one fears that Presley was not alone in being drunk with words. The passage is quoted at length because it is rather typical of the sort of hyperbolic tirades recurrent throughout the novel. The language used to describe the scene and that used to describe Presley's reactions are the same, illustrating how Norris tends to portray public and private worlds as if they were of the same order. Presley is repeatedly engulfed by emotions such as those listed above. He, we are told, is a poet by training whilst Vanamee is a poet by nature and, although the distinction is never made clear, the two do seem to enjoy an empathy enabling them to understand feelings in each other which remain obscure to the reader. But while Vanamee is set fair on the path to his apocalyptic moment, Presley's is a less happy journey, for he comes across the insurmountable obstacle of Reality, "the romance seemed complete up to that point. There it broke, there it failed, there it became realism, grim unlovely, unyielding".³⁶ These 'material, sordid and commonplace' elements throw Presley completely off-balance for, with Norris, he believes in the necessity of accurately reporting on life and adheres more strictly to the code than his creator. It is difficult to see how the demand for reportorial accuracy may be reconciled with the desire to cast the whole in an 'epic' mould. The latter does, after all, demand a certain re-structuring of actuality in the interests of art. Norris is not unduly troubled by such theoretical niceties and goes ahead where Presley draws back, writing a novel in which the grandiose, epic aspirations lie uneasily alongside the accurate picture of petty, sordid politicking. Like many a liberal idealist, Presley abandons Art for Life, deciding to throw a bomb at S Beherman but, predictably, missing his mark.

Otherwise, there are striking similarities between Norris and Presley. Like Condy, Presley is used to propagate Norrisian literary theory, especially the notion that an epic is needed to commemorate this 'last lurch of civilisation'. His desire for realism is at war with his desire to see the world in terms amenable to epic treatment. He abandons the attempt in face of this conflict, leaving Norris to toil on, trying to gloss over the discrepancies with the sheer weight of words, confusing the narrative point of view with that of the character and so dissipating the overall fictional reality. Presley's uncertain grasp of his own perspective is a no doubt unwitting but nevertheless accurate reflection of the uncertainties affecting the author. This is not to say that everything in the novel is a failure. The manner in which the trains are portrayed, 'implacable, insatiable, huge' as they and the organisation supporting them tear the heart out of the men and the earth, is a success, as is the conceit of the Southern Pacific Railroad as an 'octopus' (Ahnebrink points out that this was a popular name for the railroad, but this does not detract from the use Norris makes of it). Some passages have a force reminiscent of Faulkner's evocations of the locomotive in Go Down, Moses:

... the symbol of vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path, the leviathan, with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force, the iron-hearted monster, the Colossus, the Octopus.³⁷

Had Norris but used such crescendos more sparingly and restricted the 'monster' imagery to that symbol of Evil, the Octopus, then the excellence of many such passages would not have become lost in the incoherence of the overall fictional reality. The contrast

between the grim, iron monster and the gentle, natural earth is only fitfully exploited as the wish to give a 'fair presentation of results' wars with more artistic considerations.

It is regrettable that Norris, towards the end of the book, characterises the people in the same way as he characterised the railroad:

This living, breathing organism - the People - (from whom) there rose a terrible, droning note. It was not yet the wild, fierce clamor of riot and insurrection, shrill, high-pitched, but it was a beginning, a growl of the awakened brute, feeling the iron in its flank heaving up its head with bared teeth...³⁹

The conceit of a mass of people resembling an animal is not without artistic merit; the crowd in Nathanael West's The Day of the Locust (1939) exhibits the same destructive potential and, in Jack London's The Iron Heel (1908), the mob which ravages its way through the streets of Chicago is portrayed in just this way. It is by using the same language to describe both crowd and railroad, without in any way intending to suggest the two are synonymous, that Norris lessens the effectiveness of his descriptions. One recognises that Norris wishes us to deplore institutional greed, the large-scale economic imperatives which ride rough-shod over all humane concerns and individual achievements but, because the opposing forces are embodied in characters with ordinary frailties as well as in vast metaphors, the point becomes immeasurably complex and is not made any more accessible by the mock-Christian message purveyed by Vanamee. The balance between public and private worlds is weighted in favour of the public; the powers of the railroad far transcend those of the men. In McTeague, the public world contained little that tended to foster good and so the issues were much clearer,

the effect of environment could be traced in a simple, deterministic line. The environment in The Octopus, however, encompasses 'gigantic' forces for good as well as for evil and the fact that the clash is seen through the eyes of one who shares the author's epic bent does nothing to enhance the clarity with which the issues are presented. Symbolic and thematic inconsistencies survive, and indeed thrive, in this shaky soil. The need to inflate language and theme in order to achieve 'epic' status runs counter to the demands of 'reportorial accuracy' and characterisation suffers doubly because Presley, who could give the reader the clue to individual figures, is as intent as Norris on casting them in the wider, epic drama.

Norris is constantly creating situations in which considerable dexterity is required if any sort of logical, thematic or fictional balance is to be maintained. His brand of naturalism relies, theoretically, on a full-square, unflinching look at reality and the seamier side of life, but he is unwilling to condemn the society which countenances such poverty, or the institutions which produce the unhappiness he exposes. In The Octopus the elsewhere, the materialistic ethic which makes financial success a desirable end remains unquestioned, as does the social order which holds wealth in such high esteem. The apparent attack of The Octopus thus becomes retreat in face of the enormous implications, much as, in the Dickensian novel, the status quo rises intact above the most virulent assaults on its implications for humanity. To expect Norris to follow the path he has embarked upon to its logical, albeit blasphemous and revolutionary, conclusions, is not unreasonable. As we shall see, others, notably Jack London, were less faint-hearted.

Equivocations also prevail in Norris's treatment of hereditary evil and environmental influence. Neither McTeague nor Vandover are personally responsible for their behaviour; we see both engaged in futile struggles with the 'bestial' levels of their being. Were we, therefore, to generalise from these two particulars, we should conclude that, according to Norris, man is passive in face of heredity and environment. But this would call into question the relevance of any ethical code to the plight of mankind, so Norris neatly side-steps the whole Darwinian/Christian controversy, exploiting the former to structure his novels and the latter to sell them and ignoring all intervening inconsistencies. There must be infinite satisfaction to be gained from the contemplation of chaos and degradation when one is oneself in a comfortable, well-regulated niche. This is the satisfaction Norris offers his readers. His talent lies, perhaps, not so much in creating fictional realities as in suggesting a fictional 'reality' for the delectation of a certain class of reader; this 'reality' consists of that proportion of seaminess which is neither so great as to give offence, nor so small as to suggest that the author is trying to paint the scene in rosy tones. This 'craft' is described by Richard Chase in The American Novel and its Tradition when, talking of Norris, he says:

...(he is) a classic case of the modern low-brow novelist, something of an intellectual himself to be sure, and yet low-brow because of his nature, temperament and conviction - but also because, let us not fail to add, lowbrowism is one of the most successful literary poses in modern America.⁴²

In spite of many apparent similarities, this charge could not be levelled with equal effect against Stephen Crane. Three of his novels, The Red Badge of Courage (1894), Maggie, A Girl of the Streets (1893) and George's Mother (1894) may be described as naturalistic, for they are structured in such a way that the private worlds of the characters emerge as passive creations of the public world, following the pattern suggested by Social Determinism, and as subject to 'baser' instincts. The last two books also bear the thematic stamp of Naturalism. Maggie focusses on prostitution and George's Mother on drink. Prone to a Norrisian lexical crudity, believing in reportorial accuracy and writing novels whose prime purpose is propagandist rather than artistic, Crane nevertheless deploys the form of the novel more effectively than Norris. For his exposé of the effects of alcohol, Norris chose a middle-class protagonist, Vandover. This entailed a prolonged process of degradation and shifted the emphasis from the influence of environment to that of drink and inherent depravity. In order to make the whole a masterpiece of high drama, he introduced, as in McTeague and The Octopus, a 'beast'; in Vandover the 'brute' is an alter ego, stimulated by alcohol and capable of forcing the man down on all fours in imitation of a wolf.

Crane is more subtle. 'Baser' instincts and environmental pressures are not heavily underscored, or explicitly named, but are implicit in a portrait which allows the private world of the character some life of its own. Indeed, because George Kelcey is aware of a conflict between the religious and moral principles of his mother and the alcoholic camaraderie of his friends, it might be argued that he does not embody deterministic theory but is, in fact, a free agent

making his choice on the basis of personal weakness. However, this freedom is limited in ways directly attributable to the environment or, more accurately, the public world. The pressures acting upon George are not so abstract as those bedevilling Vandover. They are embodied by the characters around him, affecting him in immediate, personal ways. Most potent of all is his mother, a God-fearing and dependent person who tries to create for her only surviving child a 'genteel' and moral home, in the midst of poverty and squalor.

It was a picture of indomitable courage. And as she went on her way her voice was often raised in a long cry, a strange war-chant, a shout of battle and defiance, that rose and fell in harsh screams and exasperated the ears of the man with the red, mottled face.⁴³

It is regrettable that Crane's subtlety in handling the issues involved does not extend to his use of language. The man with the 'red, mottled face' appears no less than three times in the space of a page, intended, no doubt, to symbolise the depths of debauchery threatening George, and the mother, always seen through a positive mist of sentimentality, is forever being likened to a frail, lone warrior pitching battles in the vain pursuit of respectability, pathetic in her dependence upon the moods of her son.

What survives such hazards of execution, however, is a complex and profound analysis of George's situation, an analysis in which the forces of environment are not allowed to strip the characters of their individual responses. There is no doubt that the mother stands for the good life and the straight path, nor that George is aware of this. But, because she so burdens him with her expectations, expectations incompatible with the surrounding world,

and because he is so alive to the duty he owes her as the last of her surviving children, George feels trapped. He too has his dreams, full of hackneyed images of knights and white chargers, as inappropriate, in their third-rate romanticism, as the naïve, pure ideals of the mother. Thus their relationship, although full of love and mutual involvement, tends, like that of Trina and McTeague, to lead to the exacerbation of faults. The more caring, and hence over-protective, the mother, the more rebellious and desperate George becomes. It is at this crucial point that the environment makes its presence felt, offering George only one escape from his human problems and the sordid actuality, drink, "drink and its surroundings were the eyes of a superb green dragon to him. He followed a fascinating glitter; and the glitter required no explanation".⁴⁴ George likes neither the taste nor the after-effects of alcohol, is torn by guilt feelings about his indulgence, but, because it allows him at least momentary escape into a world of eloquence and comradeship, he pursues it. He is at an age when the opinions of his peers matter a great deal to him, and they all look on drinking as a laudable, manly hobby. Feeling that he "was perfectly willing to be virtuous if somebody would make it easy for him",⁴⁵ yet unwilling to accept the oppressive morality of his mother, George is not, in the last analysis, a free agent. He is caught, without strong personal resource, between two mutually exclusive extremes.

By striking a balance between public and private worlds which does not deny the characters any private 'mental life' but which, nevertheless, demonstrates the tyranny of the environment, Crane integrates his fictional and theoretical concerns better than Norris. He does not, however, rely totally on the fictional structure to imply the

theoretical or general relevance, but makes such inappropriate comments as "George socially reconnoitred"⁴⁶ and such incongruous similes as "the gang (of drop-outs) were like an army of revenge for pleasures long possessed by others"⁴⁷ in an attempt to assert the underlying implications. The militaristic bent of the narrative voice does little to reinforce the sense of struggle, for it is divorced, in its grandiloquent tone, from the ongoing events, whilst the vocabulary used to describe the private feelings of the characters is limited in a counter-productive way. To express joy, George's mother must either perform 'antique capers' or smile in a manner 'reminiscent of a charming girlhood'. The time-scale, too, seems at odds with the action and the reader is not convinced that George has had sufficient drink to warrant the debauched status which is conferred on him, not only by his fearful mother but by the narrator himself. Thus, there is much that works against the coherence of a fictional reality which relies, for effect, on the evocation of the limited perspectives of the characters and on the minutiae of their daily lives. Yet, because these are given a more prominent place than explicit, theoretical statements, one feels that Crane's novels have a sounder basis than those of Norris. He does not sacrifice the 'realism' born of close observation of human relationships in the interests of 'preaching'; he does not reduce his characters to mere puppets of Fate to further the Social Determinist argument, but allows them to play their parts in a picture of economic and environmental pressures which loses nothing from the active, as opposed to passive, sensibilities of the victims.

The characters in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets play a slightly different role, requiring less emphasis on their personal visions and more on the attitude of the public world of cramped, communal living in depressed circumstances. One can see that the book has been designed to exculpate its heroine. By stressing the inherent violence and selfishness of Maggie's world, the lack of interest it shows in her welfare and the stuff it provides an inspiration for her dreams, Crane effectively shifts the burden of blame from the shoulders of the girl who turns to prostitution to those of an uncaring society. The public world, complementing and shaping the embryonic private worlds in its grasp, becomes more than a participant in a pastiche. Although Norris achieved a semblance of this with McTeague, Crane integrates his public world with the overall fictional reality in a surer and more subtle way. Instead of aggrandising his theme in order to give its significance, he uses irony to exploit the disparity between the trivial actions of his characters and the huge import of his propagandist intention. The book opens with a mock-heroic battle between two groups of urchins:

Causes of retreat in particular cases were magnified. Blows dealt in the fight were enlarged to catapultian power, and stones thrown were alleged to have hurtled with infinite accuracy. Valour grew strong again.⁴⁸

We shift from this battle, with the "two little boys fighting in the modes of four thousand years ago",⁴⁹ to a scene of truly malign violence. The mother of one of the combatants subjects him to further injury under the guise of maternal concern:

The mother's massive shoulders heaved with anger. Grasping the urchin by the neck and shoulders, she shook him till he rattled. She dragged him to an unholy sink, and, soaking a rag in water, began to scrub his lacerated face with it. Jimmie screamed in pain and tried to twist his shoulders out of the clasp of the huge arms.⁵⁰

Brought up in an atmosphere of senseless, and usually alcoholic, violence, Maggie clings to her brother, suffering when he is hurt and looking up to him for support. When he grows up and becomes hardened by his experience, she is lost:

Jimmie's occupation for a long time was to stand at street corners and watch the world go by, dreaming blood-red dreams at the passing of pretty women. He menaced mankind at the intersections of streets. At the corners he was in life and of life. The world was there and he was there to perceive it.⁵¹

Into this dismal life comes Pete, a shallow fraud in the readers' eyes, but to Maggie, daughter of the neighbourhood drunk, a man of romantic proportions. He takes her to the theatre where she reacts with naïve wonder at the tawdriest of spectacles, feeling within her a longing to escape from the shirt-factory, her mother and the tenement. When she leaves a house reduced to chaos by her drunken mother, Crane has already prepared the reader for the next step, showing that Pete expects favours in return for his company, that Jimmie is involved with women and that the whole of Maggie's environment has combined to push her in the inevitable direction of prostitution.

However, in spite of this obvious attempt on the part of Crane to broaden the attitudes of his readers, his own sympathies are not above suspicion:

In the mingled gloom and light of the adjacent park, a handful of wet wanderers in attitudes of chronic dejection were scattered among the benches.

A girl of the painted cohorts of the city went along the street. She threw changing glances at the men who passed her, giving smiling invitations to those of rural or untaught pattern and usually seeming sedately unconscious of the men with a metropolitan seal upon their faces. Crossing the glittering avenues, she went into the throng emerging from the places of forgetfulness. She hurried forward through the crowd as if intent upon reaching a distant home...⁵²

As in George's Mother, the language seems to be working against what, in its fundamental idea, is promising material. To talk of the 'painted cohorts' is to risk the charge of prudery, a charge sorely at odds with what appears to be Crane's basic intention of expanding sympathies. The above passage is an exercise in compression. The various men Maggie invites to bed embody a social scale, as do the districts through which she passes in this journey to her suicidal end. It would seem that here, as elsewhere in the book, Crane's aspirations towards a genteel and 'literary' language have led him to use words which, no matter how fitting they may sound to him, in fact express the middle-class piety he is intent on overthrowing. Again, language interferes with the otherwise effective deployment of the form of the novel as an instrument of propaganda and does disservice to insights based on a close observation of humanity and human failings. He may avoid the laboured, underscored and excessively didactic narratives of Norris, but his forays into dialect merely serve to heighten the, at times ludicrous, and often uncontrolled, tone he adopts as the narrative voice. The irony implicit in the mock-heroism of the battle and the artistic inspiration underlying the above symbolic journey show that here, as in George's Mother, Crane is not

abusing the form of the novel in the interests of propaganda but is, in fact, trying to merge the preaching element with the fictional in such a way that the message is implied by the overall fictional reality, not merely grafted on to it. Viewed in this light, Maggie's lack of a private world and her brief appearances in the text seem calculated to underline her role as victim. Her passivity itself is a product of her environment.

The public world of the book is painted in lurid hues. Replete with 'gruesome doorways', dead babies, gangs of urchins, dirt, drunkards and nosy, noisy neighbours who seem to feed like vultures on the misfortunes of others, the picture is again blurred by the language. Repetitions intended to heighten the claustrophobic atmosphere serve only to make it tedious. Jimmie and his mother are perpetually at loggerheads, throwing the same insults at each other in alternate chapters in a way which does nothing to further the plot. Again one can discern the seeds of an artistically sound idea destroyed by clumsy execution; the contrasts between the tenement, the streets, the bars and the factory where Maggie works are lost amid a welter of grandiloquence and repetition.

It is, perhaps, in his short stories that Crane is at his best. Unencumbered by the need to persuade his readers, he is free to exploit the awareness of ironic possibilities and latent, grotesque humour which we glimpse in his novels. The lurid expectations of the Swede, in 'The Blue Hotel', are confirmed, not because the West is so wild as he imagines but because his behaviour, born of the anticipation of danger, strikes the other guests as sinister. The Sheriff in 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky' is another excellent example of Crane's ability to pinpoint the comic elements; the man is

acutely self-conscious of his newly married state, alert for any hint of mockery from his fellow townsmen, yet finds that the enemy with whom he has continued hostilities more through habit than enmity, refuses to fight him as a married man. The strength of these short stories lies in their brevity. Crane is tempted neither to be grandiloquent nor repetitive, sticking to the point and giving his readers a picture of the public and private worlds commensurate with his topic. The flaws in both Maggie and George's Mother would appear to be aggravated by the desire to ensure that the underlying implications are immediately apparent. Even in The Red Badge of Courage, a novel dealing with pressures of a different kind, the repeated animal imagery obstructs the flow of the narrative and tends to detract from the portrait of Henry Fleming's private, emotional reactions to his situation.

Crane is not, however, so bedevilled by theoretical preoccupations as either Norris or Dreiser. In 1900, Frank Norris was instrumental in the publication of Sister Carrie, a work by Theodore Dreiser whose ostensible aim was also the enlargement of public sympathies towards the 'fallen' and which enjoyed a thematic similarity with Norris's own Vandover and the Brute. A reader for Doubleday and Page⁽¹⁾, Norris

(1) The attitude of the publishers may be gauged from the following remark, taken from an editorial written to mark the brief partnership between Doubleday and McClure, "We shall endeavour, in our book publications, as we always have, to cover the entire field of wholesome and intelligent human life" (McClure's Magazine, November 1899). The editor, S S McClure, goes on to list the many authors who have contributed to the magazine and who have been published in the past, concluding with the insistence that it is not the name of the author but the 'worth' of the text which is the sole guide to selection. The policy of the magazines and their effects on authors of the day is discussed later in this chapter.

liked the book and pressed for its publication against the wishes of Doubleday himself.⁵³ Crane did not initially experience this difficulty with Maggie, having it published at his own expense,⁵⁴ but found, in 1896, that he was forced to delete many expletives in order to have it accepted by another publishing company.⁵⁵

Carrie Meeber, heroine of Sister Carrie, has quite a lot in common with Maggie Johnson; both come from economically depressed backgrounds, both are forced into employment which is demanding but unrewarding, both are exhilarated by the sort of life they see in plays and both end up as 'kept' women. But, where Maggie's story is compressed, Carrie's is laboriously detailed, intertwined with the story of Hurstwood's fall, and depends, for momentum, on a series of 'unrealistic' but happy accidents. Dreiser has a marked tendency to mount pedagogic pedestals from whose heights he addresses the reader in a manner designed to educate him, so that he may better comprehend the psychological, biological and sociological import of the story. We are presented, by this omniscient narrator, with a procession of characters reduced to 'types', directed by and responding to certain basic laws in a limited number of ways, and we are left in no doubt that they are representative samples of universal laws, partaking in a work of global significance. However, convenient it may be for an author to conceive of the world in terms of types and classes, however conducive to ease of narration and development of theme it may be to have laws to which these types respond, the effects upon the overall fictional reality of starting from an explicitly theoretical standpoint and then particularising via the characters are to be deplored. Like Norris, Dreiser drives himself into logical corners, destroys the coherence of the narrative and dispels any conviction his characters might have hoped to carry.

To those who have never wavered in conscience, the predicament of the individual whose mind is less strongly constituted and who trembles in the balance between duty and desire is scarcely appreciable, unless graphically portrayed. ...Not alone in sensitive, highly organised organisms is such mental conflict possible. The dullest specimen of humanity when drawn by a desire towards evil, is recalled by a sense of right, which is proportionate in power and strength to his evil tendency. We must remember that it may not be a knowledge of right, for no knowledge of right is predicated of the animal's instinctive recoil from evil. Men are still led by instinct before they are regulated by knowledge. At every first adventure, then, into some untried evil, the mind wavers. The clock of thought ticks out its wish and its denial. To those who have never experienced such mental dilemma, the following will appear on the simple ground of revelation.⁵⁰

The above (abridged) passage occurs at the most crucial moment in the book. Hurstwood is tempted by the money, which could lead to a life with Carrie as his mistress, and horrified by the thought of the repercussions the theft will have on his former way of life. The dilemma is fortuitously resolved when the safe door clicks shut, leaving Hurstwood, willingly or not, in the position of a thief. The accident has many reverberations; Hurstwood departs with Carrie to embark on a path which leads directly to his downfall and, indirectly, to Carrie's rise. Because this event is so crucial, the reader is left in an ethical dilemma, wondering whether the man should be censured for the theft or excused it on the grounds that it was an accident brought about by malignant fate. It leads to a degree of suffering and hardship which might have been 'justified' had Hurstwood chosen to steal, but the intervention of the door, coupled with the fact that he returns a large part of the cash shortly afterwards, makes the aftermath seem excessively cruel. The lengthy discourse on morality and instinct preceding the act is rendered somewhat redundant by the interruption of Fate. Here, as elsewhere,

chance comes into conflict with the theme of pre-determination, a conflict unresolved by either author or reader.

To turn from the implications to the passage itself, the promised 'revelation' is nowhere apparent. We are given a brief glimpse of Hurstwood fumbling with the money, alternating between 'ease and daring' of nature and a longing for Carrie, unaware that he is facing an ethical dilemma and still being fussed over by a narrator who, one suspects, realises that he is not portraying the thing at all well, for he says, "The wavering of the mind in such circumstances is an almost inexplicable thing, and yet it is absolutely true".⁵⁷ Perhaps it would be cynical to suspect so many protestations of veracity, but one cannot help but wonder whether the suggestion that his readers will, of course, find moral dilemmas a novelty is not an attempt by Dreiser to achieve by direct flattery what he so singularly fails to achieve by good writing, namely conviction.

This stratagem is doomed to fail, as is the one which relies on the theoretical discourse to paper over the cracks in the narrative. Dreiser seems almost unaware that, whilst he is intent on portraying Carrie as the victim of various social and psychological pressures, dressed appealingly in the rags of moral and social orthodoxies, he is at the same time creating a woman whose throughgoing selfishness no theory can excuse. In his eagerness to grasp the scientific insights of his day, he fails to allow that people are not conceived in terms of biological predeterminants and conditioned impulses alone. He is so dominated by the novelty of the ideas that his fiction becomes but a pale shadow of the sort of 'reality' with which the reader is familiar.

Like Norris, Dreiser shows an admirable willingness to tackle the most complex of tasks; in Sister Carrie we find psychological, biological, philosophical, sociological and ethical problems being raised and discussed at length in a manner reminiscent of Moby Dick, or even of Norman Mailer's Marilyn. In both this book and the latter, the ostensible heroine loses her central position in the fictional reality and becomes the excuse for much diffuse speculation. Carrie's mind, we are informed, is "rudimentary in its powers of observations and analysis",⁵⁸ that "self-interest with her was high but not strong" although "it was her guiding characteristic".⁵⁸ The conscience of this 'fair example of the American middle-class' is described as follows:

Her conscience was no just and sapient counsellor, in the last analysis. It was only an average little conscience, a thing which represented the world, her past environment, habit, convention, in a confused way. With it, the voice of the people was truly the voice of God.⁵⁹

Carrie's actions and her theoretical moral being never meet. The cause and the effect are widely separated by the obtrusive narrator, whose windy prose never ventures to fuse the two. It is because Carrie is so far removed from what are meant to be the wellsprings of her actions that she emerges as a heartless, nasty specimen, a shallow social climber who will take but never give. As we see her absenting herself from Hurstwood's bed at the point where his economic downfall becomes apparent, we cannot help but feel she is cold-blooded in her assessment of the trading position - no money, no sex. Dreiser, meanwhile, is frantically trying to suggest another perspective:

In the light of the world's attitudes to woman and her duties, the nature of Carrie's mental state deserves consideration. Actions such as hers are measured by an arbitrary scale. Society possesses a conventional standard by which it judges all things. All men should be good, all women virtuous. Wherefore, villain, has thou failed? For all the liberal analysis of Spencer and our modern Naturalistic philosophers, we have but an infantile perception of morals. There is more in the subject than mere conformity to a law of evolution. It is yet deeper than conformity to things of the earth alone. It is more involved than we, as yet, perceive.⁶⁰

As with the passage preceding Hurstwood's crime, this raises more questions than it answers. Dreiser suggests that the conventional moral outlook is too arbitrary, but he makes no constructive comment nor does he state his position. It remains for the reader to decide whether or not the material comforts which Carrie gains through her prostitution are sufficient justification, exculpating her from moral blame. Clearly, the conditions in the shirt-factory are intended as an argument in favour of her new choice of trade; but her expertise in the game of extortion, her lack of any real feeling for the men with whom she lives, her hard-headed pursuit of a career, her general indifference to the needs of others and her pronounced ability to pinpoint the pre-requisites of social standing all make us view her not so much as the victim of circumstances and more as their mistress. In spite of all Dreiser's expositions on her private world, we really know little about it in a personal way. In the above, her 'mental state' is abandoned with almost unseemly haste in favour of theoretical proscriptions.

The roots of Dreiser's theoretical pereorations are immediately apparent. If he does not merely transcribe passages from the source book, then he uses its vocabulary. The influence of Herbert Spencer

is visible not only in the deterministic bias common to Dreiser, Norris and Crane, but in more particular ways. Arguing from Darwin, Spencer had formulated the notion of the 'survival of the fittest', of the inherent animality of man and of the influence of environment. In First Principles (1862),⁶¹ he suggested that, as man is matter and as all matter is subject to chemical force, then man too must be subject to chemical force. Hence, we find Dreiser talking of 'chemical reactions' in the brains of his characters causing them to act in certain ways:

Now, it has been shown experimentally that a constantly subdued frame of mind produces certain poisons in the blood, called katastates, just as virtuous feelings of pleasure and delight produce helpful chemicals called anastates. The poisons generated by remorse inveigh against the system, and eventually produce marked physical deterioration. To these Hurstwood was subject.⁶²

Adopting the Spencerian notion that every action entails an equal and opposite reaction, he structures Sister Carrie in such a way that as the heroine rises, so Hurstwood falls an equivalent amount.⁶³ Whilst this use of scientific theory is quite acceptable, in that it successfully merges the fictional element with the theoretical, such use as we see in the above passage is clearly unacceptable, creating an awkward amalgam in which the character loses all conviction, because the author wishes us to look at him in an objective way, unrelated to any sort of fictional reality, public or private world.

Dreiser's delineation of the public world too suffers from generalisations which do nothing to deepen our understanding of the characters. Indeed, in the case of Carrie, these generalisations appear to contradict each

other. Described to us at one point as "a fair example of the American middle-class"⁶⁴ and at another as having sympathies "ever with the world of toil from which she had so recently sprung",⁶⁵ Carrie is something of a social anomaly. Her lack of social polish, her flight from the country in search of work and the social position of her sister, all savour of distinctly working-class origins and, if one has understood it aright, one of the reasons Dreiser uses to exculpate her from blame is her down-trodden social and economic position, her lack of education and her scant moral sense. Hurstwood is more easily 'classed'. This 'very acceptable individual of our American upper class' comes to us complete with the appropriate wardrobes of clothes and friends, is carefully placed in a hierarchy which is itself set out in great detail and is the master of a variety of social roles. His home life, 'very much a matter of convenience and public show', is in large part responsible for his flight with Carrie. From the sociological standpoint, the book might be seen as a Londonesque attempt to show the emergent middle or lower classes rising at the expense of their betters and draining their upper-class blood. Certain passages in the book strongly suggest this 'social' message:

The great create an atmosphere which reacts badly upon the small. This atmosphere is easily and quickly felt. Walk among the magnificent residences, the splendid equipages, the gilded shops ... and you shall know of what is the atmosphere of the high and mighty.⁶⁶

Such a passage would, one feels sure, have earned the applause of the socialists of the day for it appears to re-iterate their theme, to harp on the ill-effects of social inequalities and to support the idea that environment is important.

Yet elsewhere the magnificent residences, here viewed as disruptors of social happiness, become forces productive of all that is praiseworthy:

A lovely home atmosphere is one of the flowers of the world, than which there is nothing more tender, nothing more delicate, nothing more calculated to make strong and just the natures cradled and nourished within it. Those who have never experienced such a beneficent influence will not understand wherefore the tear springs glistening to the eyelids at some strange breath of lovely music. The mystic chords which bind and thrill the heart of the nation, they will never know.⁶⁷

There is, in this mellifluous gem, no hint of regret that 'they' will never know. It would appear to contradict the sentiments expressed in the preceding extract, although, of course, it would be only too easy to overlook any socialistic bias in so sentimental and vague a statement. One cannot help but wonder whether Dreiser is not trying to compensate for so much cold, scientific terminology by peppering the text with such 'literary' excrescences. However, his problem of style differs from that of Crane; where the former's artistic inspiration was hindered by crudities of language, Dreiser's multiple mixtures reflect precisely the underlying confusions and the basic inability to structure the work as a whole in fictional terms.

Sister Carrie is, by virtue of its deterministic view of man, its emphasis on the effects of environment and its desire to tackle the 'less acceptable' side of life, a naturalistic novel. That Carrie succeeds through prostitution, coming, by means of an extremely fortuitous frown, to enjoy a reputation as an actress, presents the

reader with an interesting problem. The difficulties we experienced in believing that this self-possessed young lady was a victim of circumstances are re-doubled by the vision of her ultimate success. In spite of Dreiser's repeated explanations of why she is not responsible for her actions, of why she lacks moral sense and humane feelings, we are left with an impression quite contrary to this, one which even suggests that immorality pays. This is proof of how far Dreiser has lost control of the perspectives in the book. Theoretical explanation and character motivation never merge but exist independent of each other. Having only grasped the theories by their externals, Dreiser replicates them instead of embodying them in his characters. The balance which is struck between a public world consisting of rigid class divisions and private worlds consisting of chemical reactions is superimposed upon a public world of desirable 'things' and private worlds of selfish insensitivity in such a way that the fictional reality of the novel is totally destroyed. One comes to see Dreiser's repeated discourses on the slight ability of words to convey meaning as an ironical comment on his own failure, "(words) are the shallowest portion of all argument. They but dimly represent the great surging feelings and desires which lie behind".⁶⁸

That such a family ... might have a different and somewhat peculiar history could well be anticipated, and it would be true. Indeed, this one presented one of those anomalies of psychic and social reflex and motivation such as would tax the skill of not only the psychologist but the chemist and physicist as well to unravel.⁶⁹

The above, taken from An American Tragedy, shows that, as late as 1920, Dreiser was pursuing his scientific bent in the same infelicitous style. Like Carrie Meeber, Clyde Griffiths comes from a depressed background, is filled with a longing for a better material existence, works in a

shirt factory en route to achieving his aim and has a measure of success. He is as ruthless and unscrupulous as she, abusing and eventually murdering his mistress so he may continue his social ascent. At least, he is accused of murdering her. Whether he did or not is as debatable as Hurstwood's responsibility for the theft, for Fate again intervenes at the last moment. The style of the book is very similar to that of Carrie, with the characters once more being seen as theoretical playthings rather than as people and again the arguments based on early environment fail, in the readers' eyes, to absolve them from blame. It is interesting that Dreiser continued so long in the naturalistic vein, apparently impervious to the changes being wrought by writers such as Sherwood Anderson who were fusing psychological insights with their fictional realities in a wholly satisfactory way.

As early as 1909 Jack London, in his novel Martin Eden, used a technique which facilitated this fusion and enabled him to make current ideas an integral part of his fictional reality. His protagonist, a Nietzschean superman-cum-comic-book-hero, abandons adventuring on the open seas to explore the uncharted waters of the intellect. His sole aids are an indomitable will and a penchant for the cerebral, repressed by early environment but capable of astonishing rapidity of growth. After a long, hard struggle, Eden wins public recognition, but it comes too late. Not only has he outstripped his early mentors, including his fiancée, but he is embittered by the treatment he received at the hands of the 'middle-class' characters prior to his success. His suicide by drowning is ambiguous, possibly pointing to the untenable position of the intellectual who, having penetrated to the heart of things, can see no hope nor brook any sort of contact

with those less penetrating that he or, equally possibly, suggesting that there was some unsuspected flaw in his apparently impeccable vision of reality. The reader is left to wonder whether Eden is an admirable or an admonitory figure, an inspired visionary whose death is a sacrifice to the gods of conventional hypocrisy or as a warning against intellectual élitism. London himself complained that the book had been misunderstood:

This is a book that missed fire with a majority of critics. Written as an indictment of individualism, it was accepted as an indictment of Socialism; written to show that man cannot live for himself alone, it was accepted as a demonstration that individualism made for death. Had Martin Eden been a socialist, he would not have died.⁷⁰

It is an indictment of so propagandist a work that its message should have been open to such misinterpretation. The ambiguity is rooted in the volte face performed by Eden who, admirable in all his parts, at the last moment behaves in an uncharacteristic fashion, at odds with his previous conduct. In spite of this ambiguity, London demonstrates a firmer and more thorough grasp of the ideas with which he flirted and is so able to translate them into terms consistent with a fictional framework.

Eden bears a strong resemblance to the heroes of the Dime Novel or Penny Dreadful variety but, insofar as his masculinity and his adventures make him a cliché, he is a cliché with an interesting twist. Where others struggle with physical monsters, he strides through an abstract jungle, menaced by a multitude of perspectives on the human condition and to the nature of man, overcoming the obstacles in his path through mental rather than muscular effort.

He is not a new, fey type, pale and consumptive like Brissenden, specially created to match the new terrain, but he carries the orthodox qualities of resourcefulness and courage with him in a way that reflects well on the ground he has chosen for combat. He, like Condy and Presley, is an aspiring writer and he is, in many ways, the spokesman for London, more concerned with the 'cosmic' and 'universal' implications of what he writes, with their intrinsic beauty, than with the 'superficial motifs' and is quite capable of distinguishing between the 'machine-made storyettes' and what he considers good writing. This ability to discriminate distinguishes him from Condy and Presley, for where they always looked to the immediate physical world for stimulus and allowed it to be the prime shaper of their works, Eden tends to look back to personal experiences in terms of the emotions he felt, structuring his stories around these rather than round 'objective' reality, although, of course, minute details about the physical environment are given an important place.

There is a closer autobiographical link between Eden and London than between Norris and his heroes. One finds, on reading John Barleycorn (1913), London's autobiographical condemnation of alcohol, that he himself underwent all the experiences attributed to Eden, "Critics have complained about the swift education one of my characters, Martin Eden, achieved. ...Yet I was Martin Eden".⁷¹ London clearly shared Norris's belief that one wrote best of what one had personally experienced and, to this extent, partook of the 'reportorial accuracy' dogma, whose insistence on minute detail and correct technical terminology may be traced to the influence of the magazines, with their esteem for journalistic truth. The magazines and the publishers behind them had a virtual monopoly over printed matter at this period. Eden,

and, one assumes, London, suffered much at their hands, finding either that work which he valued was rejected or being cheated of his fees. It is significant that he should turn to the magazines when he wished to get into print and should continue to turn to them in spite of many rebuffs.⁽¹⁾

In his liberal use of background detail, his extensive inclusion of technical vocabulary, his unhesitating introduction of the less pleasant aspects of life and his autobiographical basis, London may be seen to be writing in the naturalistic tradition. Martin Eden has, however, a new and better-integrated relationship between the fictional and the theoretical elements through the private world of its protagonist. Eden's active involvement with, rather than passive subjection to, the 'laws' and theories of the moment means that his public utterances and gestures, although centred on the social and the theoretical, are reflections of a private world itself increasingly cerebral and abstract, "All the life about him was a dream. The real world was in his mind and the stories he wrote were so many pieces of reality out of his mind".⁷² Indeed, the balance which is struck between public and private worlds in this novel reflects London's stated aim, the portrayal of individualism. It is not a formula discovered as the result of profound concern with the novel as a form so much as a by-product of the book's propagandist

(1) The 'policy' of at least one publishing house has already been mentioned. Because of the wide variety of magazines in print at this time, the influence of the publishers was not so restrictive as one might suppose (see footnote, p.59). Authors writing novels which were the closest rivals to the magazines could, and did, avail themselves of 'fictional' opportunities to attack the latter. Condy, Eden and Everhard (in The Iron Heel) are all 'worthy' characters who run the gamut of obstructive and insensitive magazine editors.

intention. An active and well-known Socialist, London wrote not only fiction but many polemics, pamphlets and articles on capitalism and its effects; he was, therefore, accustomed to using various literary forms to serve propagandist ends. The Iron Heel (1908) is a complex piece of Socialist fiction.

The bulk of the novel takes the shape of a narration of the events of 1912-32 by a woman involved in the First Revolution; London poses as the historian who, some centuries later, is annotating the newly discovered text. Like Bellamy, in Looking Backward (1888), London envisages the future as a communal utopia which throws into high, barbaric relief the events of the early part of the twentieth-century. His hero, Ernest Everhard is another of the race of 'blond, Nietzschean supermen', a proletarian intellectual like Martin Eden, but, because the aim of the book is to expose the brutality and immorality of the capitalist oppressors, we do not learn much of Everhard's private world. The autobiographical element does not emerge through his experiences as a worker so much as through his speeches. Everhard's address to the 'Philomaths' exactly parallels London's address to a group of wealthy New Yorkers, even down to the words of the speech and to the reactions of the audience.⁷³ Fiction only enters when Everhard begins to speak of the impending revolution. Evolutionary theory is present in the usual shape of frock-coats covering beastly instincts, "It was the forerunner of a snarl... - the token of the brute in man, the earnest of his primitive passions. ...It was the growl of the pack (of Capitalists), mouthed by the pack, and mouthed in all unconsciousness".⁷⁴ Both the Oligarchy and the People indulge in an awful blood-bath in Chicago, with the former emerging as the victor only after its ruthless and self-seeking nature has been

thoroughly explored. In spite of its sophisticated 'historical' conceit, the novel is too concerned with 'proving something' to enjoy the same success and Martin Eden.

In spite of the confusions as to its ultimate meaning, the latter remains a remarkable book. Beneath the conventional, 'realistic' touches, the interminable details of trivial economies and the gaudy 'superman' gloss, London succeeds in creating a private world broad enough to encompass the public world and all its concerns. Eden's relationship to the ideas is active and critical, eloquent of the author's profound understanding of them. The effects of Eden's philosophy on his psyche is implied rather than explored, but, with this difference, Martin Eden has a lot in common with such works as Herzog. Bellow too uses a gigantic intellect to draw observations from other areas of knowledge to within the scope of his fiction. Writing at a time when, as Herzog remarks, "The laws of psychology are known to all educated people",⁷⁵ Bellow may structure his fiction around the thought patterns of his protagonist. Writing before the private world was thus laid bare, London uses a fairly straightforward, chronological schema and a narrative voice quite distinct from that of the character; by making Eden prone to public utterance he allows the reader to penetrate the private world, for he does not prevaricate in the interests of good form. Given London's sensitivity to the demands of the novel as form, a sensitivity evident in his deployment of it as an instrument of propaganda, it is not surprising to find that Eden is equally sensitive. This bodes well for the quality of the book in which he appears; the omniverous Condy makes only a qualitative distinction between magazine storyettes and novels, and this is sadly reflected in the work in

which he appears. (i)

The success of Martin Eden may, in part at least, be attributed to the fact that, if one accepts the condemnation of individualism as the underlying aim, this aim does not prevent the author from exploring the private world of the character. Indeed, it leads to an extensive and thorough exploration more satisfying than the treatment of identical material found in London's autobiography, John Barleycorn. Sex and drink, both phenomena tending to arouse the dreaded 'baser instincts', have appeared in all the works discussed. It is an indication of how far Americans of this period lived in fear of the 'demon drink' that London should choose to organise his autobiography around this topic, turning it into a work whose pious tone survives the revelations of debauch. Crane too had a reputation as a hard drinker and there is a striking similarity between the observations he makes in George's Mother and those found in John Barleycorn. Like George, London finds that he is eloquent under the stimulus of the beverage:

(i) Most authors of this period either worked for or submitted work to magazines such as 'The Dial', 'The Wave', 'Scribner's', 'McClure's' or 'Harper's'. Norris worked for 'The Wave' on leaving college and Stephen Crane was briefly employed by The New York Tribune and The Herald before selling tales and sketches to 'The Arena' and submitting other pieces to 'McClure's'. Dreiser was editor of 'Everymonth' and wrote (about bread-lines) for 'Demorest's'. London contributed to more radical publications such as 'International Socialist Review' and 'The Appeal to Reason'. 'McClure's' and 'Munsey's' were founded by men who had initiative enough to wish to exploit the new advances in low-cost printing and the vast, untapped audience. Dealing with such topics as economics, experimental psychology and pragmatic philosophy, as well as the quality of life at factory floor level, they were at once an outlet for and a rival to writers of the period. The subject is explored at length in Harold S Wilson's McClure's Magazine and The Muckrakers, Princeton UP (New Jersey, 1970).

I was the lord of thought, a master of my vocabulary and of the totality of my experience, unerringly capable of selecting my data and building my exposition. For so John Barleycorn tricks and lures, ...flinging purple passages into the monotony of one's days.⁷⁶

Unlike Vandover, however, he is not prone to lupine behaviour, merely finding that the drink makes him see that "the so-called truths of life are not true. They are vital lies by which life lives, and John Barleycorn gives them the lie".⁷⁷ This is the sort of insight which leads him to a state of disillusion similar to Eden's, "How to face the social intercourse game and the glamour gone?".⁷⁸ The solution he suggests is prohibition, blaming the accessibility of alcohol and not any inherent weakness of his own for his craving for it.

What this book demonstrates conclusively is the extent to which an obtrusive propagandist aim may colour and distort a work. Although having no pretensions to fictional status, John Barleycorn nevertheless loses credibility precisely because its author is so intent on interpreting everything in one way, so that he may prove his thesis. Effective though it undoubtedly was as propaganda, it is not nearly so penetrating in its insights nor so satisfying in artistic terms as Martin Eden; the restrictions imposed by the basic organising principle, the condemnation of drink, are everywhere in evidence, destroying the credibility of even this 'factual' exposition. The Iron Heel, organised around denunciation of capitalism is, as we have seen, a less successful novel than Martin Eden; hence, one may see that the influence of the propagandist intention may, in fiction, work against the credible structuring of the overall fictional reality.

The propagandist purpose in the naturalistic novel often leads to the public world being given a dominating position. Environment takes the form not only of other characters and social mores, but of aesthetically and morally depressing physical surroundings. In all the works so far discussed, the 'reportorial accuracy' factor in the naturalistic tradition is evinced through the detailed description of background. Crane paints a picture of cramped, dark and noisy tenements in which there is no privacy, contrasting this with the glittering places frequented by Pete. Norris gives his readers a very full description of the furnishings in Blix's home, evoking comfort and ease, shows Vandover at his lowest ebb, trying to recreate a past self by imagining himself to be in his former sumptuous setting and scrawling the positions of various pieces of furniture on the bare walls of his room, and, as we have seen, he goes into great detail about Polk Street, shows us the treasured possessions of all the characters and allows McTeague to take his dearest things into exile with him. Carrie moves through a variety of backgrounds, alive to the implication of 'things'. Eden in his earliest days is susceptible to physical splendour, as susceptible as he is later to the stimulus of ideas. Thus physical entities, buildings, golden molars, sofas and silver services, have an active role to play in creating the public worlds of the books. Collectively they are used to delineate the characters; McTeague is inconceivable outwith the context of Polk Street and his treasured possessions, Carrie's changing social position can be seen only in her changing physical locations, not in alterations in her private world. This is quite consistent with the social determinist theory. These characters have not got active private worlds, they are creatures of their environments, and thus the massed detail of that environment comes to assume the place occupied, in other works, by the private sensibility.

Jay Martin speaks of 'the stable conventions of literary form' as providing a path to understanding for the novel readers of this period. The works considered in this chapter lead one to question this stability for, although possessing an orthodox cast of characters, they can be seen more as tentative attempts to find a fictional mode, capable of accommodating the new insights offered by science into the nature and situation of man, than as a continuation of a stable, familiar form. Such insights are, in many cases, present in their raw state, obtruding from an undistinguished fictional reality and set among characters who are as, if not more, simple than those of the popular 'dime' novel. Baser instincts manifest themselves in a manner akin to that of the Devil in older fiction, and no allowance is made for the constructions the individual mind may put upon its environment, a matter which comes increasingly to the fore in modern American literature. This early pessimism about the nature and potential of man, born of the undigested ideas thrown up by scientific excavations which were themselves crude and over-ready to accept the nearest find as conclusive, passes away to be replaced by a perspective in which stress is laid on the creative power of man as opposed to environmental tyranny, and which gives rise to novels whose fictional narrators have sole charge of the perspectives on both the public and their own private worlds.

The observation that private worlds are sorely lacking in the novels discussed is in no way intended as a condemnation of them. To have psychologically complex characters is not a necessary pre-requisite of good writing. But what would appear to be reasonable is the demand that the book be structured in such a way as to make a meaningful whole, and it is in this respect that the naturalistic novels seem

to be most deficient. Again and again, novels grind to an illogical halt, having explored various areas of meaning and toyed with various theories, having set things up as symbols only to obscure their significance by infinite extension and re-definition, having given the public world a dominating place only to reduce it to an aggregation of insignificant trivia and, finally, having neither fulfilled the propagandist intention particularly well nor produced something of worth in literary terms. The attempt to come to grips with a complex world through the medium of realistic fiction is, no doubt, laudable, but the gap between intention and achievement is great, the methods used are, in most cases, self-defeating and the quality of the finished works such that it stands as a firm rebuttal of Mr Martin's optimistic assumption that these men were givers of shape and direction to their age.

NOTES

1. Jay Martin, Harvests of Change, American Literature 1865-1945 (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962)
2. Martin, op. cit., p.243
3. Martin, op.cit., p.119
4. Martin, op.cit., p.225
5. Frank Norris, The Responsibilities of the Novelist, Essays written for 'The Critic' and 'World's Work', as well as syndicated newspaper columns, 1901-2. First collected and published with the above title 1903, Hill & Wang, American Century Series (New York, 1967)
6. Norris, Responsibilities, p.214
o
7. Lars Ahnebrink, The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction, 1891-1903 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), p.69
o
8. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.9
9. Richard M Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition, Doubleday, Anchor Books (USA, 1957), p.186
o
10. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.vi
11. Norris, Responsibilities, p.203
12. Norris, Responsibilities, p.215-6
13. Frank Norris, A Novelist in the Making, ed. James D Hart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.35
14. Frank Norris, Blix, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1899), this ed. in A Novelist, p.106
15. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.265
16. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.108
17. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.227
18. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.277
19. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.152
20. Frank Norris, McTeague, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1899), this ed. New American Library, Signet Classic, 4th ed. (New York, 1964)
21. Norris, McTeague, p.27-8
22. Norris, McTeague, p.29

23. Norris, McTeague, p.220
24. Norris, McTeague, p.340
25. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.302. Also 'Zola and Norris', pp.277-308
26. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.295
27. Norris, Responsibilities, p.217
28. Frank Norris, The Octopus, 1st pub. 1901, ed. Kenneth S Lynn, Riverside Press (Boston, 1958), p.9
29. Norris, The Octopus, p.7
30. Frank Norris, Vandover and the Brute, written 1899, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1914), this ed. in A Novelist, p.351
31. Norris, A Novelist, Blix, p.112
32. Norris, A Novelist, Vandover, p.356
33. Norris, The Octopus, p.72
34. Norris, The Octopus, p.269
35. Norris, The Octopus, p.33
36. Norris, The Octopus, p.9
37. Norris, The Octopus, p.374
38. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.174
39. Norris, The Octopus, p.374
40. Norris, The Octopus, p.368
41. Norris, The Octopus, p.5
42. Chase, op.cit., p.200
43. Stephen Crane, George's Mother, 1st pub. (New York & London: Edward Arnold, 1896), this ed. in The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane, ed. Thomas A Gullason (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p.306
44. Crane, George's Mother, p.303
45. Crane, George's Mother, p.318
46. Crane, George's Mother, p.322
47. Crane, George's Mother, p.336
48. Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, 1st pub. (New York: Johnston Smith, 1893), this ed. in The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane, p.104

49. Crane, Maggie, p.105
50. Crane, Maggie, p.107
51. Crane, Maggie, p.112
52. Crane, Maggie, p.148
52. See Philip L Gerber, Theodore Dreiser, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New York: Twayne, 1964), p.72, and Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel, From the Birth of the Nation to the Middle of the Twentieth Century (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), p.285
54. Ahnebrink, op.cit., p.89
55. Gullason, Introduction to The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane, p.21
56. Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday, 1900), this ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.241-2
57. Dreiser, Carrie, p.242
58. Dreiser, Carrie, p.2
59. Dreiser, Carrie, p.87
60. Dreiser, Carrie, p.85
61. Herbert Spencer, First Principles (New York, n.d.)
62. Dreiser, Carrie, p.302
63. Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser, His World and his Novels, 2nd ed. (Carbondale & Edwardsville: S Illinois University Press, 1971), p.71
64. Dreiser, Carrie, p.87
65. Dreiser, Carrie, p.135
66. Dreiser, Carrie, pp.269-70
67. Dreiser, Carrie, p.78
68. Dreiser, Carrie, p.110
69. Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy, 1st pub. (New York: Liverwright, 1925), this ed. (London: Constable, 1926), p.10
70. Jack London, American Rebel, ed. Philip S Foner (New York: Citadel Press, 1964), p.104
71. Jack London, John Barleycorn, 1st pub. (New York: The Century Co., 1913), this ed. The Bodley Head Jack London, Vol. 11 (London, 1964), p.157

72. Jack London, Martin Eden, 1st pub. (London: Macmillan, 1908), this ed. The Bodley Head Jack London, Vol. 111 (London, 1965), p.106
73. Philip S Foner, 'Jack London: American Rebel' in Jack London: American Rebel, ed. Philip S Foner, 2nd ed. (New York: Citadel Press, 1964), p.71
74. Jack London, The Iron Heel in American Rebel, p.141
75. Saul Bellow, Herzog, Penguin (Middlesex, 1969), p.198
76. London, Barleycorn, p.32
77. London, Barleycorn, p.34
78. London, Barleycorn, p.167

CHAPTER TWO

Henry James

Faint, illegible text at the top of the page, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.

Main body of faint, illegible text on the page, possibly bleed-through or very light printing.

117 The essay, written in 1914, is reprinted in *The New York Times* and *The Atlantic*. It is reprinted in *The Atlantic*, October 1914, pp. 117-118. It is also reprinted in *The Atlantic*, October 1914, pp. 117-118.

Beyond number are the ways in which the democratic example ... sets its mark on societies and seasons that stand in its course. Nowhere is that example written larger, to our perception, than in 'the new novel'; though this, we hasten to add, not in the least because prose fiction now occupies itself as never before with 'the condition of the people', a fact quite irrelevant to the nature it has taken on, but because that nature amounts exactly to the complacent declaration of a common literary level, a repudiation of the most operative even if the least reasoned of the ideas of differences, the virtual law as we may call it of sorts and kinds, the values of individual weight and quality in the presence of indiscriminated quantity and rough-and-tumble 'output' - these attestations made, we naturally mean, in the air of composition and on the aesthetic plane, if such terms have still an attenuated reference to the case before us.¹

Specifically an attack on 'the state of the novel in England';⁽¹⁾ the above may be applied with equal force to the novels discussed in the preceding chapter. In stressing the 'values of individual weight and quality' James pinpoints precisely the fundamental difference between his approach to the representation of reality and that of the Naturalists. When it comes to striking a balance between public and private worlds, James relies as heavily on the latter as the Naturalists did on the former. Perhaps the most crucial result of this is that, while James, in creating the sensibility of his characters could, through that medium, also create their environment and even make the consciousness of the individual become his environment, the Naturalists were bound, by their admiration for 'realism', to replicate rather than create public worlds. The only subjective colourations to enter their portrayals has nothing to do with the

(1) The essay, written in 1914, is entitled 'The New Novel' and deals with the works of Lawrence, Wells, Conrad, Compton Mackenzie and Bennett. It is reprinted in Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira, Peregrine Books (Middlesex, 1968), pp.358-392

perception of the characters, but merely reflects authorial prejudice or theoretical preoccupation. Thus, where the American Naturalists gave their readers a detailed picture of an environment and an account of the actions of their characters, implying a causal connection between the two, James's audiences were presented with a penetrating portrait of that vital link, the intervening sensibility. With the private world laid before us in such a way that the public world becomes a force capable of a variety of effects and subject to numerous interpretations, and not merely something exerting a constant pressure on the passive and uniform human psyche, we can see much more clearly the relationship of environment to action. Highly individual, often extreme and always interesting, Jamesian characters enjoy an organic relationship with their backgrounds, moulding them according to their personal predilections and preoccupations in a manner which reveals their innermost beings as much as it does their extraneous situations. Environmental detail is never a stop-gap or a space-filler. It is present in any text only because it has impressed itself in some way on an intervening sensibility.

James was alive to the importance of intervening sensibility in author as well as in character, ⁽¹⁾ maintaining that the interval between subject and representation should be filled by a mind concerned with high aesthetic standards and consciously displaying craftsmanship. In 'The New Novel' he takes issue with those writers who dispense with subtlety in their pursuit of 'reality', who choose to ignore the variety of human life in their search for behavioural

(1) "No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind", is but one of many remarks in James's essay 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) which point to this fundamental tenet. 'The Art of Fiction' is reprinted in Selected Literary Criticism, pp.78-97

norms and who disregard the need for strict, artistic control over material in their enthusiasm for the material itself. The American Naturalists were guilty of just such 'errors' and we see in them proof of James's conclusions that this sort of approach to writing does nothing to further the interest of 'truth' but merely does disservice to the mode of expression.

His critical writings never enter the realms of woolly impossibility as Norris's were apt to do; his theoretical prescriptions for the writing of fiction⁽¹⁾ and the fictions he wrote form a unified whole and, whilst one suspects that only James himself could practise what he preached with any degree of success, such consistency is a mark of his deep sincerity about and involvement with the art of fiction. As all art is the representation of reality, James set out to make the representation, as opposed to the reality, as true and aesthetically pleasing as possible. In the introduction to The Princess Casamassima he says, "But the affair of the painter is not the immediate, it is the reflected field of life, the realm not of application, but of appreciation - a truth that makes our measure of the effect altogether different".² Hence the structuring of his fictional realities around the perceptions of his characters, with the insistence that "figures in any picture, agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication forms for us their links of connexion with it".³ This

(1) Much may be learned of James's theories about the writing of fiction by reading the prefaces to his novels. In these he not only explains the idea inspiring the novel, but the strategies by which he translated it into fiction and the criteria he holds to be essential to artistic achievement. Otherwise, the comments on James's literary theory made in this thesis are based on the essays reprinted in Selected Literary Criticism.

approach scarcely lends itself to didactic or propagandist purposes. The exploration of individual responses is liable to produce personal insights rather than social generalisations and the effect is the comprehension, rather than the adoption, of a point of view.

To James the doctrine that one should write 'from experience'⁽¹⁾ was a matter for disdain, described as 'squeezing the orange'. Its suggestion that the subject-matter itself could, without modification, be transported into a fictional context and flourish there was anathema to one amongst whose priorities the treatment of any theme ranked high. Actual experience was, to James, but one half of the author's brief, "the other half being of course the application he is inspired to make of them".⁴ The very concept of experience was subject to rigid definition, "Experience, as I see it, is our apprehension and our measure of what happens to us as social creatures - any intelligent report of which has to be based on that apprehension".⁵ One must remark that, with this definition, James is imposing certain limitations on the scope of his subject-matter, for the ability to articulate experience or even separate 'social' from other forms of experience would, in his chronological context, inevitably entail membership of a certain social class. Although suggesting that apprehension is "a kind of huge spider-web of finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness",⁶ he nevertheless allows that 'reality' of a sort is important, "the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel - the merit on which all its other merits helplessly and submissively depend".⁷ This is a reality born not of the inclusion of 'facts'

(1) 'The New Novel', in Selected Literary Criticism, p.366

and 'factual detail' but of the coherent, scrupulous structuring of the fictional reality, a matter of treatment and not of subject-matter.

The treatment, too, is subject to a species of definition, although James acknowledges that every true artist must approach the writing of fiction in his own way:

I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, or any incident that does not derive interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art - that of being illustrative.⁸

To achieve this unity of structure, James uses the 'centre of consciousness' as a pivot. Physical environments are always seen through the veil of a character's perceptions, what he finds salient reflecting his state of mind; dialogues reveal a great deal about the nature of those involved, and are as full of suspended or possible meanings as any occurring in everyday life, while actions tend to be recorded through the medium of a character other than the actor and so become infused with significance. That James consistently forms his fictions around one of the extremes of our dichotomy makes him a subject eminently suitable for 'treatment' under its terms. As, however, the same dichotomy appears to bear interestingly on a far wider range of novels and as so much solid criticism of James already exists, the number of his works considered in this chapter has been curtailed. They are The American (1877), The Europeans (1878), The Golden Bowl (1904), The Princess Casamassima (1886), The Portrait of a Lady (1881), and The Bostonians (1886). Reasons for

the selection of particular texts will, in each case, be given and it is hoped that the restriction in the number of works discussed does not result in any disservice being done to one who is the recognised master of his craft.

The hero of The American (1877)⁽¹⁾ seems, at first glance, to be a familiar figure. Wealthy, swashbuckling, brash and eager to learn, the aptly named Christopher Newman might have come from the same stable as Martin Eden, Lyman Derrick and Vandover. It is a tribute to James's treatment of this character that he can possess so many of the qualities of the 'popular' hero without ever descending to the level of mere 'type'. Indeed, at the very outset of the book, James introduces the notion of 'type', only to establish it as purely a matter of outward appearance, a cover for more interesting aspects:

An observer, with anything of an eye for national types, would have had no difficulty in determining the origin of this undeveloped connoisseur, and indeed such an observer might have felt a certain humorous relish of the almost ideal completeness with which he filled out the national mould.⁹

The passage is more intricate than it would at first appear, a quality it shares with its subject, Newman. Our expectations are aroused, we expect to find Newman is yet another 'innocent abroad' whose reactions to the subtleties in which Europe abounds bespeak a naïve, perhaps even an insensitive, vision. Such expectations are at first fulfilled and James allows many of the characteristics of

(1) The edition used here is based on the 1879 revision. In 1909 James 'overhauled' the text before it was printed in the definitive New York edition. The earlier rather than the later edition is preferred here for it allows us to see how, even at the outset of his career, James was in complete control of his material and permits us to trace the development of his style to the late, infinitely more complex novels.

the 'type' to be associated with his hero, subject to modification by the ever-present narrator:

... that look ... of standing in an attitude of general hospitality to the chances of life, of being very much at one's disposal, so characteristic of so many American faces. It was our friend's eye that chiefly told his story; an eye in which innocence and experience were singularly blended ... and though it was by no means the glowing orb of a hero of romance, you could find in it almost anything you looked for.¹⁰

From the beginning, the narrator enters upon a confidential relationship with the reader, persuading him to take a faintly ironical look at Newman who has come from the New World with the firm intention of seeing the biggest and best of everything and of acquiring a wife who is 'the best article on the market'. This irony is initially warranted by the character himself and is the clearest way the narrator has of pointing out that, for the moment at least, we are not intended to take Newman seriously. One of the demands imposed on James by his desire to structure his works around the private worlds of his characters is that these characters must have sensibilities of a certain degree of complexity, capable of relating to the surrounding public world in a variety of ways. There is no place in Jamesian fiction, at least, no place near the centre of his fictional worlds, for such stunted perceptions as those of McTeague. Until Newman has had time to orientate himself in his new surroundings and to come to grips with the 'new arithmetic' of Titian and Raphael and Rubens, as well as with the alien mores of the situation, James allows him to react in 'typical' ways and to have 'typical' aspirations. To save the book from at this point devolving into popular romance, he keeps a firm, ironical hand on the narrative rudder. Newman's name is an obvious reference to his 'discovery' of the Old

World, an expedition which comes to consist not so much in the appreciation of the aesthetic, a region which he finds particularly obscure, as in the growth of his perceptions about people and the novel application he makes of techniques learned in the commercial field, together with an increase in subtlety which leads one to suspect that he is not so innocent as he would have those around him believe.

Newman, of course, never loses the colourations lent him by his background and it is clear that the Bellegardes look on him more as an American than an individual; in his presence M. de Bellegarde acts as if he were 'holding his breath so as not to inhale the odour of democracy'. But the Bellegardes, like the imagined observer of the early pages, place too much reliance on European 'myths' about Americans in their survey of Newman. Coming from a much more rigid, formalised set-up they are, naturally, more accurate reflectors of the social pressures acting upon them. Newman's is a more complex case. Although he displays a democratic disposition, the sense of equality being as 'natural and organic as a physical appetite', such a refusal to discriminate is not, from what we see of Mrs. Tristram and the Reverend Babcock, a necessary consequence of being American and goes, in this instance, with a policy of personal modesty which is quite unique. The cultural clash which is sustained throughout the novel comes across not as a comparative, social study but as something implicit in the behaviour of both sides and what, in Newman, strikes the Bellegardes as evidence of 'Americanism' strikes the reader more as proof of the operation of a very singular private world.

His tranquil unsuspectingness of the relativity of his own position in the social scale was probably irritating to M. de Bellegarde, who saw himself reflected in the mind of his potential brother-in-law in a crude and colourless form, unpleasantly dissimilar to the impressive image projected upon his own intellectual mirror.¹¹

Whether this 'tranquil unsuspectingness' is, in the later stages, altogether genuine or whether it is a result of Newman's refusal to see the nice discriminations of the Bellegardes as relevant to his main purpose is not clear. The 'singular mixture of innocence and experience' is quite inscrutable in its proportions and leaves one with the tantalising possibility that Newman quite deliberately uses the Bellegardes' expectations of his brashness and crudity as a means to forcing his ends. We are, after all, told not only that he is eager and willing to learn but also that he is 'capable of a good deal of unsuspected imaginative effort (for the sake of his personal comfort)'. His vision of Madam de Cintre is romantic for she is the chosen embodiment of his ideal and the inspirer of emotional responses in one who is otherwise hard-headed and calculating. But, if her face is for him 'as delightfully vast as the wind-streaked, cloud-flecked distance on a western prairie', that of old Madame de Bellegarde is not amenable to translation in American or any terms save those which it itself decrees. In other words, Newman's romance and naïveté are restricted in their reference. When he looks beyond Claire or some immediately satisfying set of circumstances, his penetration is quite remarkable, enabling him to see that the marquise is:

... a woman of conventions and proprieties ... Her world is the world of things immutably decreed. But how she is at home in it, and what a paradise she finds it!¹²

That Newman's character has uncharted depths is underlined by James's occasional pretensions to narrative 'ignorance', "What it was that entertained him during some of his speechless sessions I must, however, confess myself unable to determine".¹³ Our suspicion that he is in fact a very cunning operator must, therefore, hinge on a few isolated actions. Having told Madame de Bellegarde that he intends to marry Claire, he replies to her observation "I am a very proud and meddling old woman"¹⁴ by saying, "Well, I am very rich".¹⁵ To make so explicit the 'bargaining' position of each side is a brutal lapse of taste explainable only as the result of crass ignorance or as the outcome of a deliberate policy of shock tactics. On receiving congratulatory telegrams from America, after the ratification of the 'treaty' in the form of an engagement, Newman again flaunts the power of the marquis:

The next time he encountered old Madame de Bellegard (he) drew them forth and displayed them to her. This, it must be confessed, was a slightly malicious stroke; the reader must judge in what degree the offence was venial. Newman knew the marquis disliked his telegrams, though he could see no sufficient reason for it.¹⁶

This is surely a carefully-calculated piece of effrontery, designed by Newman to show that he at least need pay no heed to the marquis's predilections and, at the same time, a dangerously jocular gesture outwardly confirming the family's impression that he is crass and vulgar. As we see him taking his ease and even enjoying the tense, uncomfortable 'hospitality' of the family, we suspect Newman even more of being the possessor of a large, humorous awareness, finding food for enjoyment in the tenseness designed to discomfit him. That he is prepared, for his private purposes, to submit, apparently unwittingly, to the exploitation of others is evidenced by his

attitude to M. Nioche and his daughter. Knowing that he is being 'rooked', he is willing to comply with their demands in order to enjoy the company of the old man, whilst steering markedly clear of the girl herself in a manner which suggests that, in spite of the alien setting, he is not deficient in his ability to judge mankind.

Thus, we come to see that the character originally set up as something of a comic 'type' is far from being either comic or typical. Not only do many of Newman's actions contradict the idea that he is a credulous, unsubtle American, but to have a protagonist unaware and unresponsive to his situation would also contradict the tenets so firmly held by James. Our growing vision of him as someone whose active and profound private world has built a stratagem whereby it utilises the expectations of the public world in order to gain its ends would appear to be finally confirmed by the thoughts which go through Newman's mind after he has been defeated by the Bellegarde's:

He saw himself as trustful, generous, liberal, easy, patient, pocketing frequent irritation and furnishing unlimited modesty. To have eaten humble pie, to have been patronised and snubbed and satirised, and have consented to take it as one of the conditions of the bargain ...¹⁷

These are not the bitter, martyred constructions imposed in hindsight by the offended party but rather the reflections of a failed strategist. It would appear that Newman not only saw himself as playing a role designed to placate the family but was also aware of the covert insults which they assumed he would not perceive. The analysis is, naturally, not entirely accurate; we have already remarked two occasions on which he quite intentionally went against what he knew was their 'taste' and there are moments when he seems

not fully aware of their subtle insinuations. The feeling that his conduct was motivated by a deliberate plan is, however, inescapable and confirms our idea that the 'cultural' element in his behaviour, the extent to which he acted as a 'typical American', was dictated more by personal than by social forces.

James's use of buildings in this and other novels is quite different from that of the Naturalists. Where the latter made the environment an oppressive influence and a source of much suffering, James makes his buildings reflect the character of their occupants, perhaps exploiting the fact that, at the level of society with which he almost exclusively deals, people have sufficient money to choose their physical situations. In the case of the Bellegardes, the dark, cloistered place, full of secret corners and impenetrable to the vulgar gaze, can be seen as reflecting their position in society and their attitude to the world. It is no accident that it is only when they open their house to their friends, giving a reception designed to set their seal of approval on Newman, that they realise the full implications of the proposed alliance and, unfearful of public censure, retract. Such fastidiousness is, of course, self-defeating, entailing not only the loss of Newman's eminently desirable fortune but also the loss of Madame de Cintre, the bait with which their trap was loaded.

Claire's retreat into the even more enclosed sphere of a convent is a tribute to the power of her mother. "My power is in my children's obedience"¹⁸ is no idle boast on the part of Madame de Bellegarde. She is a ruthless exploiter of the deference due to her as matriarch, is heedless of the damage she wrecks on the emotions of her children

and is, in her subjugation of personal considerations to the persona consistent with her status, the perfect, polished product of her society.

In spite of the overt contrasts between modes of life, moralities and traditions in which the book abounds, its chief interest lies in the growth of Newman's private world, a growth hastened by the need to survive in alien soil but which occurs with singularly few concessions to the nature of that soil. Early in the book, his 'eye' is characterised as:

Frigid and yet friendly, frank yet cautious, shrewd yet credulous, positive yet sceptical, confident yet shy, extremely intelligent and extremely good-humoured, there was something vaguely defiant in its concessions, and something profoundly reassuring in its reserve.¹⁹

All that one may say, on the strength of this oxymoronic passage, is that Newman is, potentially, either a great many things or nothing at all, that he may use his diverse nature to enormous effect or succeed merely in cancelling himself out through indecision. As we see him disposing himself in easy, flexible folds around the monolithic rigidity of the Bellegardes, we feel that he is using his potential to maximum effect; yet, after he has lost Claire, we see him torn by indecision, wondering whether or not to use the evidence he has against the marquise.

One gathers that in America the organising ideal of his life has been the acquisition of a fortune and, in coming to Europe, the organising ideal is the 'purchase' of a wife. Although these ideals may be typically American, the person who sets out to fulfil them is unique and owes little to his native, public world. The portrait of Newman's

private world is so penetrating and profound that not only does he soon outstrip the 'swashbuckling' element already noted, but the book as a whole survives what, handled less skilfully, has the makings of faded, hackneyed romance. Despite its titled ladies, its wicked mother, its murder and its duel, the book is written with the firm conviction that it could never be consigned to the realms of fairytale any more than its protagonist could be placed in any gallery of 'types'. Such confidence is shown by the inclusion of a discussion on types and by the mention of fairytales on more than one occasion. As Claire tells the story of Florabella and the prince, the only parallel the reader makes is that intended by the author, certainly not any which might reflect to the detriment of the book itself. This is a tribute to James's control over his material, showing that the finished product does not depend on its ingredients for its shape but on the treatment of those ingredients. The diverse public world which underlies Newman and Madame de Bellegarde are, as we have seen, present in the novel as nuances in conduct and subtle differences in outlook, completely integrated with the structure of the overall fictional reality through the medium of their embodiments.

In the context of a discussion of The American it is worth making brief mention of a book which is, in many ways its mirror image. The Europeans, written in 1878, was James's response to public demand for a novel with a happy outcome.²⁰ Given in outline, the plot of any Jamesian novel sounds rather thin and melodramatic, for it is without that vital consideration, the treatment. To say that a Baroness and her brother come to America to seek their fortunes, hoping to use to advantage their sophistication and worldly knowledge and relying on the lack of such things in their American cousins,

that the brother succeeds in winning the hand of one daughter but that the Baroness finds herself defeated by people so apparently simple and malleable, is to give no hint of the comedy or the incisive narrative flavour of this short novel. Coming to trade their social cachet for a fortune, much as Newman went to trade his fortune for the 'best', the Baroness and her brother are, again like Newman, unfortunate in running up against one of the more resistant native 'types'. Although the reader may suspect that, in crossing the Atlantic to pursue their fortunes, these particular Europeans may be attempting to avoid those knowing enough to fairly assess the quality of their 'cachet', their cousins, the Wentworths, have no standards by which to make such judgements. They are, however, equipped with a vast reserve of natural suspicion which proves, in the end, as effective as any real insight.

James is broadly comical at the expense of his Americans, making them not merely American but New England Puritan and so the possessors of attitudes, perhaps less venerable, but no less ingrained than those which informed the conduct of the Bellegardes. Unlike the latter, they are not presumptive or proud, they do not present to the world an implacable, impenetrable face, but their house, airy, symmetrically arranged and painted in moderate tones, reflects a deeply rooted sense that the world ought to be organised along certain overt, moral lines. In judging them to be 'all foreground' the Baroness is as mistaken as Newman was in believing that he had imposed his terms on the Bellegardes. In her presumptive judgement, she fails to realise that, innocent though the Wentworths may be, they are solidly united in defence of the simple order they expect in their world, perhaps even more solidly united than the Bellegardes because what they defend is newer and less firmly established. Comedy is born of the sources

of their moral alarms; the Baroness's 'morganatic' marriage reminds Mr. Wentworth of "a certain Mrs. Morgan whom he had once known, and who had been a bold, unpleasant woman";²¹ they associate the idea of a French maid with that of a theatrical soubrette and, as a group, generally take fright at the new and the strange. Ironically, although the logic underlying their judgements is usually laughable, the conclusions they reach do, in themselves, savour of the truth.

On first encountering her cousins, at a meeting carefully stage-managed by the Baroness to produce maximum effect, we are told that, "Their attitude seemed to imply that she was some kind of conversational mountebank, attired, intellectually, in gauze and spangles".²² As Eugenia gives way to 'one of the most genuine emotions she had ever known', feeling that at last she has found a secure family niche, the Wentworth's emotions are far from simple, their sense of duty impelling them to make their cousin welcome whilst their inborn fear of the new and the strange suggests caution, if not flight. Unaware of the reactions which her 'calculated' charm produces in her cousins, the Baroness sets up camp in their guest cottage, festooning it with pieces of material and pink silk blinds whose aesthetic appeal is lost, for the Americans, amid considerations of hygiene and usefulness. Eugenia fails to penetrate to the heart of their vision, content with her notion that they have 'the trustfulness of the golden age':

...she knew that she had never been so real a power, never counted for so much as now, when, for the first time, the standard of comparison of her little circle was prey to vagueness. The sense, indeed, that the good people about her had, as regards her remarkable self, no standard of comparison at all, gave her a feeling of almost illimitable power.²³

One might have supposed that, were the Baroness truly as 'remarkable'

as she appears to believe, then the lack of a standard of comparisons would lead to an underestimation of, rather than an expansion in, her power. Our early suspicion about the motives underlying her trans-Atlantic expedition are here confirmed.

Operating without the benefit of such privileged information, the Wentworths nevertheless succeed in ousting the Baroness. She, like Newman, gains her early advantage from her novelty; but, as the Bellegardes feel justified in excluding Newman when they recognise him as a 'commercial type', so the Wentworths close ranks against her once she has been proved guilty of deliberate lies, or at least of what, for her, is a customary approximation to the truth:

There were several ways of understanding her: there was what she said, and there was what she meant, and there was something between the two, that was neither.²⁴

Although James tells us the 'chief interest',²⁵ in this short novel resides in the consciousness of Gertrude and in her reactions to the advent of the Europeans, this aspect, culminating in the marriage of the best of the old world, in the shape of Felix, to the best of the new, Gertrude, is not the book's chief recommendation. The visit of the Europeans shows that what the community had taken for a vexatious 'peculiarity' in Gertrude's outlook was no more than the manifestation of a freer, though still moral, spirit, which, one feels, will flower once removed from the repressions of the Wentworth home and which will happily compliment Felix's easy attitude to the world. Those whose private worlds reflect more directly the influences of the public, who have less individuality and whose 'faults' are more manifest, are, however, more interesting. In taking this gently

ironic look at one of the more extreme forms of American innocence, James subtly infuses the entire novel with an appropriate clarity. Even the Baroness, of all the characters the most complicated, feels that "her power, in the American air, seemed to have lost its prehensile attributes"²⁶ and that her motives become (relatively) 'pure', perhaps because the complex strategies with which she is used to operating would be completely inappropriate and unappreciated in the context. The Wentworth régime is too tentative and fearful to produce martyrs such as Claire de Cintré. Expressly designed to avoid suffering and complexity, the worst effect it may have is mild dissatisfaction and comedy is born of its inability to cope with anything beyond its customary field of operations:

The sudden irruption into the well-ordered consciousness of the Wentworths of an element not allowed for in its scheme of usual obligations, required a re-adjustment of that sense of responsibility which constituted its principle furniture.²⁷

As the head of the family, Mr. Wentworth, like Madame de Bellegarde, is the most outstanding representative of the attitudes of his microcosm, his 'scrupulously adjusted, consciously-frigid' vision setting the tone for the others, even the reprehensible Clifford. As James declares 'rather brutally', the Baroness sees herself as using Clifford in order to make Mr. Acton jealous, persuading herself that he is 'crude' and in need of the gloss which only intercourse with an older woman may provide and assuming that close contact with her will make him react like any European youth by falling a little under her spell. Again she is guilty of misconstruing her New Englanders, "He exaggerated her age; she seemed to him an old woman; it was happy that the Baroness, with all her intelligence, was incapable of guessing this".²⁸

Thus, when she tells Acton that Clifford is in love with her, she is comically unaware of how patent a lie this appears in the context; what to her is quite probable is to the Americans inconceivable. Their system is such that passion of any sort is ruled out. Even the 'worldly' Acton is subject to this limitation:

If this was love, love had been overrated. Love was a poetic impulse, and his own state of feeling with regard to the Baroness was largely characterised by that eminently prosaic sentiment - curiosity.²⁹

Because the book is designed as a gently ironic look at the attitudes of a group of characters who carry through the precepts of their public world in a logical and conscientious manner and because it is 'romantic' in its outcome, its humour, the issues involved and the private worlds of the individual participants are far more accessible than they were in The American. As James shows in a later novel, The Bostonians, similar frigid, Puritanical attitudes can be the cover for much psychological complexity and inspire a work of considerable depth. Thus, the simplicity of structure in The Europeans is the result of a deliberate, artistic choice and not the inevitable outcome of portraying characters who are, in their relationship to the public world, essentially naïve. Such stringent, artistic control over material could, as we shall see in a later chapter, well have been taken as a salutary lesson by both Sinclair Lewis and Edith Wharton.

Yet, whilst structuring the overall fictional reality around a private world does not necessarily produce great psychological complexity, it is only when the central private world is deep and devious that the outstanding artistic merits of James are revealed and tested to their uttermost. As Americans abroad, Maggie Verver and her father

naturally have certain attitudes and experiences which link them with Christopher Newman, Rowland Mallet, Isabel Archer and other such temporarily expatriated characters. The Golden Bowl (1904) is, however, structured in such a way that the 'American' aspects of the characters become inseparable from their individual private worlds and to attempt to analyse the latter in isolation from the former would require considerable distortions. Only to the European characters in the novel are the Ververs possessors of 'fabulous' or mythical qualities born of their cultural, as opposed to their personal, backgrounds. What, in this limited interpretation, is overlooked is the fact that between the official and the actual purpose of the Ververs' joint enterprise there lies a gulf filled by unspoken, personal desires and intentions. The ambition to furnish the New World with some of the best spoils of the Old is, to both American and European eyes, comprehensible and even praiseworthy. But, as James shows in this late, high-water mark of complex craft, the Ververs, unlike the Wentworths, are not susceptible to accurate analysis on the basis of their overt behaviour and, indeed, as the novel unfolds, we see that Maggie Verver was initially unaware of why the microcosm consisting of her father and herself operated as it did. Throughout the novel, James uses images of water to reflect the state of this joint 'private' world. At the outset, these images are suggestive not only of warmth and ease but also of an environment somehow muffled from all the harsher aspects of the 'real' world, distorted, beautiful and unreal. The Prince, whose perceptions structure the first half of the novel and whose entrance into this aquatic microcosm causes ripples forceful enough to disturb its suspended inhabitants, demonstrates the acuteness of his vision by using images of water:

... the waters in which he now floated, tinted as by the action of some essence, poured from a gold-topped phial, for making one's bath aromatic. No one before him, never, - not even the infamous Pope - had so sat up to his neck in such a bath.³⁰

That one well schooled in the highest luxury that Europe could afford should be so impressed by the environment which the Ververs create for themselves is some measure of the extent of their wealth and the opulence of its deployment. Like Jay Gatsby, they apparently come from 'nowhere', erupting on the European scene in so magnificent a manner that to question the sources of their riches would appear an irrelevant impertinence. James uses this obscurity of origin to heighten the fabulous aura surrounding the pair. This, and the fairy-tale imagery which recurs throughout the book, comes to centre on Maggie Verver.

If the history of the Ververs is obscure, that of the Prince is public knowledge. His lineage, the actions, status and progress of each of his ancestors, are recorded in libraries and are, in their venerable infamy, what first recommend the Prince to the voraciously antiquarian Ververs. Maggie is quite open in admitting to the Prince that his family history is the major reason for her interest in him and makes it clear that, to her father and herself, he is a 'find'. This naïve approach to the complex matter of the past is, of course, symptomatic of Maggie's American origins, bespeaking the uncritical admiration of the new nation for the old. It is, however, equally eloquent of Maggie's perception of the world, her inability to see that the Prince might possibly be offended by so scant attention being paid to his personal merits and her innocent yet arrogant assumption that the history of a person consists of no more than the roll of his ancestors.

The irony is, of course, that after her marriage she comes to realise that the personal as opposed to the public history of her husband is the really salient thing about him, a recognition which entails the destruction of the walls of her 'aquarium' in an effort to make meaningful contact with the real world.

There are two parts of me. ... One is made up of the history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless betises of other people - especially their infamous waste of money that might have come to me. Those things are written - literally in rows of volumes, in libraries; are as public as they are abominable. Everybody can get at them, and you've, both of you, wonderfully, looked them in the face. But there's another part, very much smaller doubtless, which, such as it is, represents my single self, the unknown, the unimportant - unimportant save to you - personal quantity. About this you've found out nothing.³¹

Culpable of wilful disregard of this explicit, pre-marital warning by the Prince, Maggie nevertheless chooses to view the discovery that her husband and her best friend were intimately acquainted with each other before her marriage as evidence of their treachery. Although she regards the world which she shares with her father as a place in which she enacts a protective role, we can see that it is she and not he who is its pivot, that Mr. Verver, in playing the role of child-companion to his daughter and in protecting her innocence by myriad, expensive strategies, has led her not only to assume that the whole world revolves around her but also that her, patently mistaken, vision of 'reality' ought to dictate the shape of the public world. Thus, we have a situation which is the complete reverse of that portrayed by the Naturalists, a private world with sufficient power to shape the public, not merely by retreat into personal fantasy but by autocratic command.

She must be kept in a position so as not to disarrange them. It fitted immensely together, the whole thing, as soon as she could give them a motive; for, strangely as it had by this time begun to appear to herself, she had hitherto not imagined them as sustained by an ideal distinguishably different from her own. Of course they were arranged - all four arranged; but what had the basis of their life been, precisely, but that they were arranged together? Ah! Amerigo and Charlotte were arranged together, but she - to confine the matter only to herself - was arranged apart. It rushed over her, the full sense of all this, with quite another rush from that of the breaking wave of ten days before; and as her father himself seemed not to meet the vaguely clutching hand with which, during the first shock of complete perception, she tried to steady herself, she felt very much alone.³²

Maggie has moved by slow degrees to this apocalyptic moment of 'complete perception', at first ignoring the irregularities which the inclusion of the Prince and Charlotte produce in her little world, interpreting their closeness as a strategy designed by them to facilitate her efforts to sustain an intimate relationship with her father. Although one may feel a momentary pity for her in her new and complicated situation, her complete ego-centricity is inescapable. She assumes that her father needs her, never stops to wonder whether or not the Prince may resent being treated as an appurtenance with no say in its disposition and uses her child as if he were hers alone, to be given to Mr. Verver and not the Prince. One can see that the latter, in spite of his early, firm resolve neither to show any of the 'rapacious' or selfish characteristics of his race nor to in any way harm what he sees as the innocence of the Ververs, is put in an anomalous and difficult position. He looked on his marriage as a means of redressing some of the wrongs done by his forebearers, of putting the Verver money to good use, yet he finds himself relegated to a minor role and given boundless freedom in which to pursue those personal, romantic interests which, according to European lights, are acceptable when undiscovered. As he says, European morality is

"Slow and steep and unlighted, with so many steps missing that - well, that it's as short, in almost any case, to turn round and come down again".³³ It is to his credit that, if he does in fact descend, he delays doing so for a considerable time, putting his desire to protect Maggie above his personal inclinations. Mr. Verver, the instigator of the protective policy which all those around Maggie accept, marries Charlotte not for himself but in order to make his daughter feel that 'she hadn't deserted him'. He too is a victim of her ego-centricity, ultimately being used as the instrument of Maggie's revenge on Charlotte and having to carry the American City venture to its natural conclusion by taking his wife and his object to America, so leaving Maggie free to create another microcosm around herself.

Thus, Maggie's moment of realisation is in itself flawed. Failing to see that she is still central to all the others, she assumes that because the disposition of her world is not precisely what she had wanted it to be, then it must be arranged contrary to her interests. With that wilfulness which we have already remarked, she takes it upon herself to hide her new perspective, to continue outwardly to act as if all were as before whilst, at the same time, making strenuous and subtle efforts to re-establish her ascendancy. Abandoning her tendency to see the world only in its overt aspects and to impose on it a frame of consistent relations, 'that ideal consistency on which her moral comfort almost at any time depended', she becomes alive to the slightest nuances in the behaviour of others, fitting these into a new and infinitely complicated schema whose mainstay is the assumption that she is regarded as an innocent dupe.

To portray this extremely complex private world's growth from innocence

to what it assumes to be knowledge, James uses a variety of techniques. As Maggie, seeking solace after taking her first, tentative steps on the 'stage', finds in the behaviour of the Prince evidence that he sees her in a new light, the aquatic imagery is revived:

She had subsequently lived, for hours she couldn't count, under the dizzying, smothering welter - positively in submarine depths where everything came to her through walls of emerald and mother-of-pearl.³⁴

By using the language previously associated with the Ververs' unreal world, James allows the reader to see that Maggie is here reverting to that distorted vision. Similarly, the fairy-tale language early associated with the fabulous self-sufficiency of the Americans gradually shades into that of nightmare, evoking Maggie's awareness that all is not well whilst showing that, as yet, she has not succeeded in analysing the ills or making them tangible, "She had a long pause before the fire, during which she might have been fixing with intensity her projected vision, have been conscious even of its taking an absurd, fantastic shape".³⁵

In this, as in other works, buildings and architectural terms are used to provide analogies for the states of mind of the characters. The Prince is, naturally, likened to a 'Roman palace' and Mr. Verver to a 'neat, square room'. It is significant that the latter should be a room rather than a building, for the Ververs are without a firm base, using their 'moveable feast' of things to delineate any environment, regardless of the existing structure. That this points to the self-contained, mutually created fantasy with which they surround themselves is a measure of how meticulously James has structured his overall fictional reality. When Maggie first begins to ponder the

fact that she has been able to marry the Prince without, apparently, making any break with her 'past', her thoughts are described in terms of 'ivory towers' and 'pagodas':

This situation had been occupying, for months and months, the very centre of the garden of her life ... she had carried on her existence in the space left her for circulation ...; looking up, all the while, at the fair structure that spread itself so amply and rose so high, but never quite making out, as yet, where she might have entered had she wished ... though her raised eyes seemed to distinguish places that must serve, from within, and especially far aloft, as apertures and outlooks, no door appeared to give access from her convenient garden level.³⁶

The welter of metaphors and similes with which Book Second, the one structured by Maggie's vision, opens are symptomatic of her bewilderment, her inability to discover which, amongst the many possible interpretations, is the most accurate. Yet, at the same time, the fact that in none of them does Maggie see herself as the active agent warns us that her ultimate analysis of the situation will hinge less on the motives and feelings of others and more on her personal position.

With consummate skill, James introduces a golden bowl as an analogy for the relationship between Maggie, the Prince and Charlotte. The actual bowl plays a vital part in the action of the novel, first appearing when Charlotte persuades the Prince to accompany her on an expedition whose ostensible purpose is to choose a marriage gift for her to give to Maggie. The Prince, as a person with discerning vision, immediately realises that the beautiful object has a hidden flaw in it and refuses to allow his companion to buy this thing of 'ill-omen'. Charlotte sees it only as something which is beautiful, unusual and which she can just afford. Even at this point, one can see that

there is an analogy between the views each character holds of the bowl and their respective attitudes to the possibility of any resurrection of their former intimacy. In coming into possession of the bowl, by some trick of fate, Maggie at the same time receives definite proof that her husband and her best friend were at one time intimate and sufficient evidence to convince her that the relationship did not cease after her marriage. After Fanny Assingham, the person responsible for bringing the Prince and Maggie together, has deliberately smashed the thing into three pieces, Maggie picks it up and holds it together again with her hands. What the bowl symbolises for each of the characters is subtly different but Maggie's act of salvage is the closest she comes to openly asserting her power and her intentions. She aims to get "The bowl with all the happiness in it. The bowl without the flaw".³⁷

As, for the first time, Maggie's actions become motivated by deliberate, calculated intent, she begins to see herself as an actress, staging scenes whose effect on the others she can only partly measure. Her heightened awareness of the public world makes no concessions to its opinions and outlooks. Maggie persists in filtering everything through the medium of her private perceptions and organizes all her impressions around herself. To counter-balance the excessively analytic consciousness of his central character James relies less on the corrective of the narrative voice than one might suppose. Maggie's vision is allowed very free reign and the bulk of the information the reader receives is distorted by her eyes. As, however, her views are ever in a state of flux and she never achieves full confidence as an actress, our distrust of her perspective never abates and we remain constantly aware of how far she is the slave of her own ego. When she gazes on any scene, filled with the sense of her own part in it, we

stand behind her, seeing the thing not only through her eyes but also through ours, a view in which she appears to be a much more integral part of the action. Significant moments are 'framed' throughout the book, either by doorways or windows, so that the reader is reminded of the need for objective judgement of what is spectacle and is gently steered away from the simple acceptance of Maggie's viewpoint. Pretending to some independence, Maggie sits apart from the others, reading instead of joining in their game of bridge. Although she finds that she is so obsessed with them that she cannot concentrate on her book, to her idea it is they who are obsessively aware of her:

Erect above all for her was the sharp-edged fact of the relation of the whole group, individually and collectively, to herself - herself so speciously eliminated for the hour, but presumably more present to the attention of each than the next card to be played.³⁸

Maggie's sensitivity is clearly tainted with more than a little of the 'spoilt child'. She chooses to sit apart, yet resents the exclusion. Her tenuous grasp of the belief that it is she who is dictating the shape of events is shaken when, a few moments after the above, Charlotte follows Maggie out onto the terrace, 'traps' her and, to Maggie's fervid and fearful imagination, demonstrates her power by dumb show:

... but she stopped Maggie again within range of the smoking-room window and made her stand where the party at cards would be before her. Side by side, for three minutes, they fixed this picture of quiet harmonies, the positive charm of it and, as might have been said, the full significance - which, as it was now brought home to Maggie, could be no more, after all, than a matter of interpretation, differing always for a different interpreter. ... as Charlötte showed it, so she must at present submissively seem to take it.³⁹

The decision to dissemble is but Maggie's way of salvaging her vision of herself as an actress. She is genuinely intimidated by Charlotte, for her conception of the woman is vague and threatening, she seems an unknown quantity with potential control over both the Prince and Mr. Verver. It is perfectly possible that Charlotte has no intention of engaging in a power struggle with her step-daughter, that she merely wishes to discover why Maggie's attitude to her has changed so much for, being unaware that Maggie has definite proof that she and the Prince enjoyed a pre-marital relationship, she can discern no reason other than jealousy of her union with Mr. Verver behind the alteration. Bound as we are by Maggie's vision of events, we are nevertheless aware that there is a distinction to be made between the 'real' and the 'ideal' here. It would seem that Maggie's power is 'ideal', that she can only impinge on others insofar as they allow her to and that their conduct is not proof of malice towards Maggie but rather of unease at her curious state of mind.

It is neither possible nor necessary to establish what may stand as objective truth. Given a character who is so determined to shape public world according to her own lights and who is, equally, prepared to take for victory what others might regard as defeat, whose perspective is allowed to dominate the narrative to the exclusion of all others and who might be said to be doing no more than creating a fantasy with but the barest reference to actual events, we can only savour the depths of James's portrayal of this private world and analyse the means by which he creates it. To some extent, the Prince in the first part of the novel introduces a balancing point of view. Culturally and personally alien to the Ververs, his initial interpretations of them are remarkably sensitive and accurate, making Mr.

Verver's objection that his future son-in-law 'understands him too well' a telling remark. Fanny Assingham, in her constant perusal of the motives and actions of her friends, is a typical Jamesian commentator; but we cannot rely on her analyses, cast into doubt as they are by the scathing comments of her husband and biased by her desire to evade the responsibility she feels for having brought the Prince and Maggie together. Accustomed as these two are to both intrigue and analysis, they are quite at a loss to understand Maggie once she begins to operate in covert ways. She makes her leap from directness to dissimulation without taking advice from or consulting with the public world. This is consistent with the self-sufficiency so fundamental to the microcosm she shared with her father and with her ego-centricity. James, although he does not attempt to drive his readers to conclusions about Maggie, does show that she is capable of a vindictive enjoyment of her assumed power.

She felt with her sharpest thrill how he was straitened and tied, and with the miserable pity of it her present conscious purpose of keeping him so could none the less perfectly accord.⁴⁰

This odd, childish, dramatic private world appears to owe very little to the cultural background of its mistress. Although the Prince sees Maggie's directness as part of her being American he might, in this, be as mistaken as she in the amount of weight he gives to the influence of 'national type'. It is equally possible that her lack of subtlety stems from a selfish disregard for the feelings of other people, a disregard nurtured in the self-sufficient microcosm created for her by her father. Touching though her assumptions that the public world is a sympathetic place peopled with well-wishers may be, they nevertheless suggest a lack of any real experience and are as

easily seen as marks of ego as of innocence. As the Prince later discovers, there is 'an element of staleness in all the freshness and of freshness in all the staleness, of innocence in guilt and guilt in innocence'. In other words, the Ververs' world is a curious place, an artificial amalgam designed to support a 'game' in which lapses of logic are acceptable to all but the would-be analyst. Amerigo survives the 'relinquishment of his real situation in the world' only by conceiving of himself as motivated by a higher ideal, one which may or may not be allied to an honourable abstinence from physical relations with Charlotte, in defiance of ample opportunity. Adept at analysing people according to their national predispositions, the Prince apparently fails to comprehend his wife. The code of conduct which she chooses to follow is inspired by her imagination propelled by her ego and enacted without reference to how far the public world conforms to her vision of it. It might be said that such individuality marks Maggie out as an American of the same order as Isabel Archer, that only an American could have the naïve arrogance to assume that an individual might impose what construction he chooses on the public world. But, when one recalls that Maggie was brought up in a world whose dimensions she could dictate, one feels that the personal rather than the cultural element is responsible for her conduct.

The Golden Bowl is a superb example of the 'centre of consciousness' theory being translated into practice, for Maggie Verver's private world is her environment. It may be that she is acting in response to active duplicity and to an action occurring in a past in which she initially claimed to have no interest, or she may merely be misconstruing the reactions of others to her altered, suspicious state of mind,

finding in them proof of an illusion. Whatever the 'truth' may be is, however, irrelevant. What is important is Maggie's vision; actual events become relevant only after they have passed through the filter of her private world. In his introduction to The Princess Casamassima (1886), James showed that he was aware of the dangers of making his characters 'too interpretative of the muddle of fate':

They may be shown as knowing too much and feeling too much - not certainly for their remaining remarkable, but for their remaining 'natural' and 'typical', for having the needful communities with our own precious liability to fall into traps and be bewildered.⁴¹

There is no danger of Maggie becoming 'too priggishly clever', for the credibility of her conclusions is cast into doubt and we see that, of all the complexities with which she has to deal, her dawning awareness itself is perhaps the greatest. She stands, finally, neither condoned nor condemned but comprehended.

The novels discussed so far might lead one to conclude that James's approach to the writing of fiction imposed certain restrictions on him so far as subject-matter is concerned. This conclusion might well be said to survive an examination of The Princess Casamassima (1886), a novel in which James attempted to show that the acute sensibility does not exist only at drawing-room level and that discriminations may be made between things other than works of art, precious objects or nationalities. The book is about a group of anarchists in London, the central observer being one Hyacinth Robinson, a young man whose deprived childhood, spent in a depressed environment, makes his appreciation of the beautiful and his susceptibility to 'good' conversation seem somewhat incongruous. Neither his supposed,

illegitimate descent from an English nobleman nor his French mother appear to be adequate explanations of these attributes, saw perhaps through specious genetic argument to which James seldom resorts, and he quite outstrips his impoverished step-mother, Miss Pynsent, in the realms of 'gentility'. Even if we accept that Hyacinth's refinement is innate, there still remains a disparity between character and environment which is quite unique in Jamesian fiction. Torn between political affiliations appropriate to his social status and an admiration for aspects of that status quo which achievement of his political ends would destroy, Hyacinth fails to resolve these extremes. Finding life insupportable, he finally resolves his dilemma by committing suicide, an action which F. W. Dupee considers to be a reflection of the "fate of sensibility in the modern world".⁴² One wonders whether, in taking so publically-orientated a message from this novel, one is not being tricked into expectations of broad social comment by the nature of the subject-matter.

James strives hard to suggest the limitations of Hyacinth's vision and taste and, at the same time, to structure the novel around this awkward private world. The result is that the central character, lacking 'firm connexions' with his background yet being unable to rise successfully above it, comes across neither as a 'type' nor yet as an individual of 'solid specification', being left to wander amongst the extremities of his world in an aimless fashion and undergoing no significant alteration in sensibility. His public world partakes of a curious shapelessness, not so much as a result of his ambivalent vision as of the nature of James's portrayal of the minor characters. Individually, Millicent, the shop-girl who aspires to a tawdry sort of supremacy, Miss Pynsent, the Dickensian old-maid who

defends her notions of what is genteel in the face of far from genteel circumstances, Paul Muniment, the laconic inspirer of devotion in others, and Monsieur Poupin, the 'republican of an old-fashioned sort' who treats his illness as if it were the fault of an iniquitously arranged society, are interesting, effective studies. But, collectively, they are burdened with a refinement of tone sorely at odds with their supposed situations and, with the addition to the list of a Princess who is as intent on descending the social scale as Millicent is on climbing it, one can see in the picture comic elements which, one fears, are other than those which James intended.

Aware that this sortie into unfamiliar territory was liable to leave him open to attack, James wrote a defence of it which is more consistent with his theories about the writing of fiction than the novel is with the practice:

I felt in full personal possession of my matter; this really seemed the fruit of direct experience. My scheme called for the suggested nearness of some sinister anarchic underworld ...; a presentation not of sharp particulars, but of loose appearances, vague motions and sounds and symptoms, just presences and general looming possibilities.⁴³

This, as far as it applies to the portrayal of the anarchist 'organisation', is perfectly acceptable. One would not expect one with James's view of the priorities in the writing of fiction to present the public world in a manner suggesting 'versimilitude'. It is when the 'looseness and vagueness', effectively used in the portrayal of the public world, come to be associated with the private world of Hyacinth that one feels justified in objecting. Although it is a part of his character that he should fail to resolve the extremes

which attract him, this does not mean that he should fail to make meaningful contact with the public world, or that his private world should be prone to inconsistency. His failure as a centre of consciousness may, as we shall see, be attributed to the dilemma produced by the need to limit his vision and analytic potential to what is consistent with his social status and the conflicting need to give him an acute, active sensibility. Hyacinth cannot, as Maggie Verver does, structure the public world according to his own lights. Not only does he lack the necessary financial power but he is constituted in such a way that the public world, in all its hard actuality, is important to him. Such value as his youthful, impetuous private world might have brought to the book is negated by the odd mixture of precocity and naïveté which render it ultimately ineffectual and unconvincing.

It is not to be supposed that Hyacinth suffers from any lack of nice, 'realistic' touches, those such as Norris or London would have used. Like Martin Eden and Condy, he enjoys a dream of literary distinction; like McTeague, he is stirred by the street scenes which betoken preparation for Sunday; like Maggie Johnson, he is susceptible to appalling drama, losing himself "so effectively in the fictive world that the end of the piece ... brought with it something of the alarm of the stoppage of his personal life"⁴⁴ and, like Vandover, he allies himself with a young woman whose obvious vulgarity is no deterrent. His innocence is more pronounced than that of Newman, making him unsure how to treat the butler at Medley and inspiring him with admiration for the kitchen garden. Such discriminations as he is capable of making are carefully attuned to the opportunities he has had for comparison. Visiting the residence of

Captain Sholto, he notes that the book-bindings are of poor quality. We may assume that, although he admires the splendour of the rest of the place, nothing it really comes up to scratch. On going to the Princess's home, he reacts as follows:

... the spectacle of long duration unassociated with some sordid infirmity or poverty was new to him; he had lived with people among whom old age meant for the most part a grudging and degraded survival. In the favoured resistance of Medley was a serenity of success, an accumulation of dignity and honour.⁴⁵

The link between buildings and people is less eloquent than elsewhere. It might be supposed that the spectacle of a building enjoying the 'dignity and honour' denied to most people with whom he is acquainted would serve to reinforce Hyacinth's political views; if this is the intended connexion, then it is not immediately apparent and one is left with the impression that this centre of consciousness is not given to making much of the contrasts it observes.

As ever, James is adept at using the physical locations of his characters eloquent reflections of their states of mind. The Prince, at the outset of The Golden Bowl, wanders about London, 'taking possession' of it in an erratic manner, noticing faces and objects in shop windows in so haphazard a fashion that we soon come to appreciate that, whilst he cannot escape the awareness that, as a city, London is a place of enormous power, he is too pre-occupied to relate any of his observations. Similarly, as Hyacinth emerges from an anarchist meeting, filled with resentment because Muniment does not appear to distinguish him, with his ardour and devotion, from the rest, the street scene around him is re-shaped by his preoccupations:

Bedraggled figures passed in and out and a damp tattered wretched man with a spongy purple face ... stood and whimpered in the brutal blaze of the row of lamps. ... the silent vista of the street ... stretched away in the wintry drizzle to right and left, losing itself in the huge tragic city where unmeasured misery lurked beneath the dirty night, ominously, monstrosly still, only howling, for its pain, in the heated human cockpit behind him.⁴⁶

The awfulness of this vision inspires Hyacinth with the Quixotic desire that the anarchists should pour forth, there and then, to set the world to rights. Returning to the meeting, he gives vent to a burst of revolutionary fervour so convincing that it leads to his selection for some vital, unnamed task, some atrocity to be committed in the name of social justice. The effects of his visit to Medley become obvious when, returning to his home in Lomax place, he sees it through new eyes, eyes whose vision is heightened by the knowledge that his beloved step-mother is dying:

He had known the scene for hideous and sordid, but its aspect today was pitiful to the verge of sickening; he couldn't believe that for years he had accepted and even a little revered it. He was frightened of the sort of service his experience of grandeur had rendered him.⁴⁷

Thus, Hyacinth is as effective as any other Jamesian character when it comes to responding to his physical location. Naturally, in the familiar setting of London, he is better able to impose his own construction on the scene than when, in the alien setting of Medley, he is less certain of himself. It is not surprising that, given his own, sordid background, he is so susceptible to beauty. What is less predictable, however, is Hyacinth's covert reverence for the English aristocracy, "he was rather disappointed in the bad account the Princess gave of it",⁴⁸ and his apparent choice of modes of speech,

"he used that expression because she had let him know she liked him to speak in the manner of the people".⁴⁹ One cannot but wonder that Hyacinth's apparently limited experience should have left him with a choice.

All these trivial inconsistencies relate, of course, to his central dilemma, "that he couldn't work underground for the enthronement of the democracy yet continue to enjoy in however platonic a manner a spectacle which rested on a hideous social inequality".⁵⁰ Only infrequently do his sympathies expand beyond his small, personal compass to the point where he sees himself, his dilemma, his suffering and his fate as tiny and irrelevant against the great backcloth of misery which the narrator portrays so well. Self-absorption is one of Hyacinth's chief, and unattractive, characteristics; as he lacks the criteria by means of which he might truly judge the world of the Princess, so he lacks the ability to put his personal dilemma in a wider context. He is not so much torn between the status quo, with its monuments to the highest endeavours of man, and the anarchist cause, with its promise of hope for all, as between the Princess, whose beauty he cannot help but admire, and Paul Muniment, whose pervasive personality has profound effects on more than the susceptible Hyacinth. Predisposed, by a romantic vision of his parentage, to see himself as one torn between the aristocratic and the democratic, his encounter with Muniment and the Princess confirm this trend.

With his mixed, divided nature, his conflicting sympathies, his eternal habit of swinging from one view to another, he regarded the prospect in different moods with different intensities. ... he was afraid democracy wouldn't care for perfect bindings or for the finer sorts of convention.

...

The reader will doubtless smile at his mental debates and oscillations, and not understand why a little bastard bookbinder should attach importance to his conclusions. 51

Resisting what seems like an attempt by James to make us, for fear of proving ourselves to be snobs, insist that we do understand, we may heartily agree with the concluding sentence. From the oft-repeated notion that the roots of the dilemma lie in Hyacinth's blood, we are by this time aware that he cannot hope to reach any conclusion and that the story of his struggles is less an analogy for the 'fate of sensibility in the modern age' than an example of the unenviable situation of the cornered irresolute. As he vacillates towards an end imposed on him by an unbreakable commitment to one extreme, his sensibility plays feebly with the public world, relating to it in two distinct, counter-productive ways.

Whilst it would be quite possible to argue, plausibly, that James intended his readers to see in Hyacinth's dilemma a distillation of the great social issues of the age, one feels that, as ever, the limited, personal experience is paramount. Hyacinth suffers less from an intense feeling about the aristocratic versus the democratic issue than from the odd, irregular nature of his chosen mentors. The Princess, an undoubted aristocrat, professes the desire to see the status quo overthrown and Muniment, the presumed anarchist, openly despises some of the 'tumults' created in the name of the cause. Too innocent to see that the Princess is merely in quest of some adventure to stimulate her jaded appetite, that for her the anarchist cause is only a source of titillation, and too naïve to question the nature of Muniment's interest in and feeling for him, Hyacinth seeks personal relationships with those to whom he is a mere pawn or plaything. His

suicide occurs at a time when he has been rejected by the Princess in favour of Muniment, a motive more immediate and private than his inability to commit the act demanded of him by the anarchists. Thus, although the issues of the public world act as a backcloth to his suffering and although he tends to translate his emotions into broad, social terms, personal failure and private inadequacy are his salient features and are at the root of his poverty as a centre of consciousness.

Where, in other books, the centre of consciousness is incapable of analysing its situation effectively James introduces firm, narrative direction, in this novel even the narrative voice is a little erratic and less than sure in its hold over the irony:

She was, to her blunt, expanded fingertips, a daughter of London ...; she had drawn her health and strength from its dingy courts and foggy thoroughfares and peopled its parks and squares and crescents with her ambition; it had entered her blood and her bone, the sound of her voice and the carriage of her head; ... she understood it by instinct and loved it with passion; she represented its immense vulgarities and curiosities, its brutality and its knowingness, its good-nature and its impudence, and might have figured, in an allegorical procession, as a kind of glorified townswoman, a nymph of the wilderness of Middlesex, ... the muse of cockneyism.⁵²

If the above is ironic in intent, then it is poor irony. One might almost be in the throes of a grandiloquent rendering of the 'product of the environment' theme so beloved of the Naturalists. In spite of foreshadowing Hyacinth's response to Millicent's vulgar vitality, the passage lacks the gentle irony which pervades descriptions of Lady Aurora, Augustus Vetch and the rest and which makes them so successful. Perhaps James encountered a difficulty with the character of Millicent, for he could not afford to make Hyacinth's

admiration for the damsel at all comic. It is difficult to discern the 'narrative' interest in this description, or indeed, to find any other justification for what appears to be an unusual lapse from high literary standards.

Throughout the novel James treads the perilous line dividing the vagueness which suggests menacing possibilities from the vagueness which is born of authorial uncertainty. As the centre of consciousness is so central to the structuring of all Jamesian fiction, it is to this, here and elsewhere, that we must look first in seeking the analytic key. It would seem that the unformed or vacillating sensibility is not a happy medium for James. Roderick Hudson, in the novel which bears his name as title, is, like Hyacinth, put in a situation where he finds his resources lacking; although his artistic talent cannot be doubted, even it is destroyed by his failure to adequately control the other aspects of 'la vie boheme' which he attempts to follow in an extreme and parochial way. He too fails to analyse his situation and to establish a set of priorities. This book, however, survives the shortcomings of the figure initially intended as its central focus. As James himself remarked, in the subsequent and penetrating Preface to the novel, the centre of interest does not reside in Roderick. As benefactor, Rowland Mallet displays a forbearance and tolerance born less of his natural, New England Puritan inclinations than of his private dilemma, and it is this dilemma and the observations of this character which really bear the weight of the structure of the overall fictional reality. Comically scrupulous in his pursuit of artistic benefactions, Mallet has to fight hard against the moral discriminations so much a part of his character and his background. In the interests of art, he tolerates

Roderick's most extreme *bêtises* and subjects himself to the demands of his protégé. The irony and tragedy is, of course, that had he but behaved as his natural inclinations demanded, he might well have saved Roderick from excess and failure. Attempting to follow an unnatural code of conduct, he is prone to a leniency which Roderick, whose artistic talents are more than matched by his ability to exploit others weaknesses in his own interests, is quick to seize upon. The relationship between the two, so ideal in theory, becomes in practise the mutual exacerbation of faults. Roderick is exasperated by the moral reserve which he feels in Rowland and, unjustly, accuses him of 'watching' him. As he is thus driven on from excess to excess, Rowland becomes ever more grimly determined to be tolerant and ever more obviously disapproving. Where vacillation and lack of firm personality were, in The Princess Casamassima, factors which tended to weaken the structure of the overall fictional reality because they were at its core, in Roderick Hudson (1879) those same factors become sources of strength because they affect a sensibility other than the one possessed by them. One can never be sure how far Roderick believes the high-flown sentiments about art to which he gives frequent vent, but this is not vital. What matter is how far Rowland believes, or wishes to believe, them. That two characters should approach the same end, art, from disparate directions and should, through their individual adherences to the public roles of benefactor and artist, be forced to overshoot their joint target and come to rest in an area of private suffering is a more profound basis for a novel than the publically-orientated vacillations of a private world, small not only in terms of experience but in analytic potential and sensitivity.

When you have lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell, and that you must take that shell into account. By the shell, I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman, we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances One's self - for other people - is one's expression of one's self, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps - these things are all expressive.⁵⁵

Thus Madame Merle, in The Portrait of a Lady (1881), neatly enunciates what is a very basic premise in every work by James. Given that the characters with which he deals have, on the whole, sufficient means to command their 'envelope of circumstances' in its material shape, then, clearly, that shape is a vital clue to the selecting sensibility. Houses reflect the state of mind of their occupants, the moral ordering of the sensibility finding in the arrangement of its physical surroundings what might be called an 'objective correlative'! As a result, details about the environment are never redundant to the main purpose of delineating an apprehending consciousness and so giving a subjective portrait of a situation. Unlike other 'novelists of manners', James makes extensive use of the converse of this; the states of mind of characters are frequently, as we have seen, likened to hypothetical rather than actual environments.

Such integration of public with private world can, of course, only take place when the character has the power to define his physical situation. Hyacinth Robinson stands as a singular example of James's failure to supply his central observer with an alternative 'code' by means of which he may make sense of his world. Christopher Newman, as we have seen, lacking the vital clue to the 'envelope' of the Bellegardes, has, in its stead, a firmly delineated world view of his own; in The Europeans we witnessed a clash between two such material

'codes' and were privy to the resultant confusion whilst, in The Golden Bowl, the characters carried with them a collection of material objects whose significance was obscured by the lack of a fixed setting and which were, ultimately, irrelevant to the central consciousness. Maggie Verver, like Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady, chooses to impose her own definition on the world. Isabel is fortunate in having so wise a friend as Madame Merle, whose timely warning that there are certain conventional signs which must be given and taken in commerce with the world is not fully comprehended by this wilful heroine. She, like Newman, has her approach to the business of living firmly pre-set, making her "an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant."⁵⁴ This 'tenderness' is born of her defeat at the hands of a man long used to contriving the material codes as cover for his own selfish ends. Isabel's youthful, crude and arrogant approach flounders only when she seriously overreaches herself and precisely because she fails to pay sufficient attention to the warning issued by Madame Merle. So confident is she in her own ability to structure the world and to read its 'simple' signs that she has "the habit of taking for granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right".⁵⁵

Osmond proves the downfall of this naïve conviction. A cold, secretive man, obsessed with superiority, his true nature is accurately reflected by his hill-top dwelling with high, impenetrable windows. To him, material possessions are a vital scale of values by which people are to be judged. In Isabel he sees the wife he desires, a 'silver' rather than an 'earthen' plate, something of clearly hall-marked worth, in monetary terms, and a ready vessel for his ideas. So fundamental

is the role of objects that to this character their worth and human values are interchangeable terms. His respect for 'objets' and his taste are, however, but symptoms of a more profound distortion of vision. Before being introduced to Osmond himself, the reader is given this portrait of his house:

... this antique, solid, weather-worn yet imposing front had a somewhat incommunicative character. It was the mask, not the face, of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way. ... The windows of the ground-floor, as you saw them from the piazza, were, in their noble proportions, extremely architectural, but their function seemed less to offer communication with the world than to defy the world to look in.⁵⁶

Inside the house, this game of 'trompe l'oeil' continues through rooms which are "telling of arrangements subtly studied and refinements frankly proclaimed".⁵⁷ Such frankness is limited in its application. Even Ralph Touchett, the first to divine the true foundations of Osmond's approach to the world, is initially deceived:

I think he is narrow and selfish. He takes himself so seriously. He's the incarnation of taste. ... He judges and measures, approves and condemns altogether by that.⁵⁸

This is but partially true, Osmond's taste is not, like that of Edward Rosier, the result of a long study of and a genuine feeling for beautiful objects. It, like the frontage of the house, is the cover for a personality whose sights are set in quite a different direction. Osmond is intent on utilising the attitude of society, so succinctly outlined by Madame Merle, to mystify the public world. His appreciation of and respect for bibelots do not relate directly to the objects but to the importance allotted to them by others.

He always had an eye to effect, and his effects were deeply calculated. They were produced by no vulgar means, but the motive was as vulgar as the art was great. ... He lived exclusively for the world. Far from being its master as he pretended to be he was its very humble servant, and the degree of its attention was the only measure of success.⁵⁹

Thus, in Osmond we see how complex the relationship of public to private world may become. Because his public image is shaped along conventional lines and because he is aware of the responses he wishes to elicit, it is scarcely surprising that the inexperienced Isabel is deceived into thinking that she is allying herself with a man of discriminating depths, whose interest in her is a tribute to her unique qualities. Too late, she discovers that, "His ambition was not to please the world, but to please himself by exciting the world's curiosity and declining to satisfy it".⁶⁰

The juxtaposition of Isabel and Osmond is interesting for, in spite of their apparent and obvious differences of temperament, they are not so widely divergent in their basic philosophies. Isabel is as much the slave of her image of herself as Osmond is of his. Determined that "her life should be in harmony with the most pleasing impression she should produce, she would be what she appeared and she would appear what she was",⁶¹ she is guilty of a disregard for the feelings of others commensurate to Osmond's. Ironically, it is through her failure to live up to this ideal that she falls into his hands. Her loudly proclaimed independence of spirit and her disdain for conventional modes are weak by comparison to his superbly unified mask. Seeing her money and her personage as desirable additions to his collection, Osmond sets out to please her and she, cowed by his 'taste' and her ignorance of such matters, appears a great deal more

malleable than she in fact is, potentially a 'sort of served dessert'. Both are deceived by public images which are but poor reflections of their true natures. The depths of Isabel's nature are, like Osmond's, 'an obscure place', "between which and the surface communication was interrupted by a dozen capricious forces".⁶² Although Osmond's conduct is regulated according to one, constant ideal whilst Isabel's is subject to many, either preconceived or created according to circumstance, the two are prone to a similar lack of humanity and enter upon a relationship without ever attempting to penetrate their respective masks.

As was said earlier, where a character lacks the experience or the wherewithal to establish contact with the world through the conventional channels described by Madame Merle, James supplies an alternative. In the case of Isabel Archer, this alternative is an independence of spirit so strong and so contrived that it shades into sheer perversity. She marries Osmond 'not for what he really possessed, but for his poverties dressed out as honours'. That her decision encounters so much opposition merely serves to confirm her in the notion that its execution is proof of her much vaunted freedom. Our sympathy is engaged when we see that, through pride, she will not confess to having made a mistake, attempting to subjugate herself to the imperious and alien demands of her husband and refusing the assistance of her true but unappreciated friends, Ralph Touchett and Caspar Goodwood. It is no less tragic because it is by her deliberate choice that she cannot turn to warm, humane companions but must, out of constancy to a now defunct idea of her independent self, be condemned to live in inhospitable and unfeeling realms. This situation is not to her taste, she begins to long for a 'sort of corselet of silver' with

which to array herself for the social 'battle'. In other words, she wishes to be better equipped to face her ill-chosen fate. To the last, however, she retains her ideals and, having failed herself to measure up to them, persists in applying them to others.

It was a disappointment to find that she (Henrietta) had personal susceptibilities, that she was subject to common passions, and that her intimacy with Mr. Bantling had not been completely original. There was a want of originality in her marrying him - there was even a kind of stupidity.⁶³

James is proved right in his conviction that she should 'arouse a tenderer impulse'. Her vitality, originality and single-mindedness, the potentially good parts of her personality, are lost in the arid waste of life amongst Osmond's collection. She, who is so inept in her handling of human relationships, is faced with some of the most complex possible. We see in her changing attitude to material possessions the early signs of her decline. From having 'no sympathy' with them, she comes to envy "the security of valuable 'pieces' which change by no hair's breadth, only grow in value, while their owners lose inch by inch, youth, happiness, beauty".⁶⁴ They alone can satisfy Osmond's obsession with surface appearance. Whether there is a parallel growth in her sympathy with human beings, we do not discover and we are left to wonder whether she returns to her husband prepared to let her mind become a 'pretty piece of property' and nothing more.

Were she to do so, she would be sacrificing her standard to one which is demonstrably worth little. Between the extremes of idealisation and utilisation of human beings and social norms, extremes exemplified by Isabel and Osmond respectively, Madame Merle, social parasite par excellence, represents a sensible balance. Forced, through lack of

means, to rely on her popularity with others, she has become a social analyst of great insight. Her dependence on society is of a practical nature, whereas that of Osmond is a quirk of personality. Such figures as she appear on the periphery of many of James's novels, acting as a realistic corrective to the idealistic perceptions of the central characters, providing a commentary which is free from all illusion about the system upon which they depend for their existence and, frequently, attempting to assist the bewildered central characters. Such advice as they proffer is usually ignored, for it always conflicts with the vision which the informing intelligence is striving to impose on the scene. Thus, we see Fanny Assingham, Madam Grandoni and Mrs. Tristram, all of them founts of sound social wisdom, pushed into the shadow by the caprices of characters who have the power to structure the world according to their personal lights. The social parasite makes an appearance in many of the novels of Edith Wharton, bearing a striking resemblance to those created by James and suggesting that this figure is a standard part of the actual 'public' world.

As we have seen, however, it is not the regular or the practical sensibility which interests James. Those who have apprehended the 'codes' by which the public world speaks in a sufficient and straightforward manner must be placed on the edge of the narrative, for they are not a truly rewarding study. Where, in the works of Mrs. Wharton and Sinclair Lewis, these 'codes' come across to the reader as a universal language, complete with primers and readily accessible to the most rudimentary intelligence, in the works of James they become vastly more subtle, modified from novel to novel according to the predisposition of an active and non-conformist consciousness. What most distinguishes his writings from those of other 'novelists of

manners' is the extent to which he allows the private worlds of his characters to be active tools, capable of re-shaping the public sphere rather than passively accepting it. In The Bostonians (1886) we have a superb example of how far the private world may appear to conform to some desirable public image and of how far it may succeed in deluding even itself as to its true nature.

This novel is also proof that, when attempting to come to grips with a topical subject, James is far happier to do so through the sensibility of the upper middle-class, American female, with all its concomitant psychological problems, than through the comparatively simple medium of the underprivileged book-binder. The book comes, ultimately, to be centred on a struggle between two, bitterly opposed people for the possession of a third but each initially views the other in terms drawn from the public world, relying on 'codes' of various sorts in their attempt to reach mutual understanding. In the period immediately succeeding the Civil War, it is scarcely surprising that Olive Chancellor and Basil Ransom should first see each other in terms of North and South. To Olive, Basil's Southern background ought to give her reason for disliking him. The late conflict had been responsible for the deaths of her two brothers but, by a subtle process of reasoning, she sees that, as his side had been defeated and as he too had suffered losses, they may meet on the common ground of suffering. "His family was ruined; they had lost their slaves, their property, their friends and relations, their home; had tasted of all the cruelty of defeat".⁶⁵ For her it may be sufficient that "he had admitted that North and South were a single, indivisible political organism",⁶⁶ the reader sees, in the subsequent sentence, "Their cousinship - that of the Chancellors and Ransoms - was not very close",⁶⁷ the implication

that the fundamental issues are not resolved. This notion is confirmed when we see that Ransom, coming from the blighted South, is 'determined to win this battle'. Less subtle than Olive, he is nevertheless aware of the importance of the North/South distinction in this first meeting, "He had always heard Boston was a city of culture, and now there was culture in Miss Chancellor's tables and sofas"68

If the 'codes' which structure this first 'skirmish' decline in importance for the characters as they discover more personal grounds for dislike, they remain important for the reader. Ransom clings tenaciously to a view of womankind redolent of Southern 'chauvinism' and tries, in spite of many aberrations, to follow an ancient chivalric code whose chief assumption is that woman is a soft, defenceless creature. This, in the aggressively feminist circles in which he moves, is almost comically inappropriate, and is gradually revealed to be no more than a cover for great, personal inadequacies. Behind the chivalrous, public mask there lies one who is a failure in business and who, in his relationship to women, emerges as crass and bullying. Olive is equally guilty of using a public face as cover for her personal perversities. Unwittingly, Ransom is the first to give us the clue to this, when he studies Olive's house and reflects:

... it seemed to him he had never seen an interior that was so much an interior as this queer corridor-shaped drawing-room of his new-found kinswoman; he had never felt himself in the presence of so much organised privacy or of so many objects that spoke of habits and tastes.⁶⁹

Behind the facade of high respectability and devotion to ideals, there are elements in Olive's nature irreconcilable with the austere, cold

public image and even at odds with the organisation of her private world. Unmarried 'by every implication of her being' and so disposed that "manly things were what, on the whole, she understood best",⁷⁰ we see that Olive despises her sister, the feminine Mrs. Luna, on, of course, ideological grounds, regarding her as "given up to purely personal, egotistical, instinctive life, and as unconscious of the tendencies of the age, the revenges of the future, the new truths and great social questions".⁷¹ Instinct is what Olive most distrusts. Her public and private worlds are so contrived that there is no place in which natural feeling may survive. Thus, when she decides to take charge of the life of the beautiful Verena Tarrant, it is not because she is lonely or because she loves the girl, it is for the 'cause'. However, it is in her frantic attempts to save her protégée from all male contact that she first betrays her lesbian leanings and it is through this relationship that she finally comes to face the truth about herself. Whether she is capable of doing this with brutal honesty or whether she preserves some shred of illusion is not absolutely clear. What is clear is that James here presents us with a private world intent on deluding itself and using the forms provided by the public world to do this. Olive can explain all her actions to herself in the same terms as they are explained in the public world, namely, as evidence of devotion to the cause of women's rights. By doing this, she is not, as Maggie Verver did, trying to shape the public world, nor is she, after the fashion of Fleda Vetch, trying to interpret it; all she is doing is placing reliance on its formal aspects as a means to private deception.

The shape of this world encourages Olive in her ways. Like the

Wentworths, she is accustomed to looking for duties and appealing to 'her conscience for tasks', but she extends this rigorous view of the world far beyond their innocent ken, to the point where she believes it is possible to 'forbid' certain emotions, where she can run deliberately counter to all her inborn fastidiousness by, for example, travelling by public transport to 'put off invidious differences' between herself and working girls, and where she can interpret her interaction with the world on an ideological level. There is much irony implicit in the credence she gives to her assumptions. Whilst she abhors 'invidious differences', she is much attached to physical comfort and bases her sympathy with the less fortunate on a vision of what life would be like in the absence of such refinements. This is but a small example of the 'flaw' in her vision. She cannot see that her dedication to the female cause, in its zeal and steadfastness far outdoing that of other, more prominent reformers, is in truth a dedication to her personal fulfilment. The 'cause' is, for her, the embodiment of private inclination, allowing free intercourse with an almost exclusively feminine society and based on antagonism to men. Were she to effect reforms in keeping with her true nature, they would be radical beyond the wildest dreams of the reformers, giving woman the right to approach woman on grounds of equality with man. But she is no Sappho intent on setting up Lesbos in the heart of Boston, only a person whose complex nature feeds its private illusions on the ready fodder of the public world. Everything, her opposition to Ransom and her adoption of Verena, is as explicable on the basis of her ideological leanings as it is on what the reader comes to realise is a curious sexual perversity.

... she knew, again, how noble and beautiful her scheme had been, but how it had all rested on an illusion of

which the very thought made her feel faint and sick. What was before her now was the reality, with the beautiful, indifferent sky pouring down its complacent rays upon it. The reality was simply that Verena had been much more to her than she ever was to Verena.⁷²

In the poignant passages of soul-searching which surround Olive's final confrontation with the truth about herself, James leaves his readers in some doubt as to how thorough she actually is, "Here again I must plead a certain incompetence to give an answer. Positive it is that she spared herself none of the inductions of a reverie that seemed to dry up the mists and ambiguities of life".⁷³ Such 'incompetence' serves, effectively, to avoid any direct statement of Olive's physical predilections and leaves the reader a measure of freedom to adjust his sympathies around this lonely and tragic figure whose distress is so acute that she wishes Verena might drown rather than live to become Ransom's; such a wish, in its perverse cruelty, might also be seen as the fruit of sexual jealousy. One cannot forget how distasteful Olive found the vision of Dr. Tarrant 'laying hands' on his daughter during one of their inspirational sessions, nor how uncharacteristically she reacted, with physical display, to Verena's vow of celibacy. Olive might be said to have two private worlds, one full of sensuality and utterly repugnant to the second. It is significant, in this context, to note the outlay of her apartments; the room in which we first see her consists of two long, narrow chambers, joined to make one unit, and looking out onto the much admired Back Bay. This is the perfect 'objective correlative' of her dual nature, its apparent view eminently respectable and publicly acclaimed but its farthest reaches lying far behind the facade, where the outer world is quite lost from sight.

It is a tribute to James capabilities as a writer that, in spite of her many unattractive features, Olive is not, in the last analysis, an unsympathetic character. Her valiant attempts to regulate her life and emotions, her lack of true human companionship, her pathetic efforts to please and to keep Verena and her general inability to function as a full, emotional and intellectual human adult, all of these things are brought to mind when we see her, facing final defeat, incapable of finding release, or at least, finding release in an uncharacteristic laugh, "a shrill, unfamiliar, troubled sound, which performed the office of a laugh, a laugh of triumph, but which at a distance might have passed almost as well for a wail of despair".⁷⁴

The two characters who most impinge on Olive's life, Ransom and Verena, neatly counterbalance her psychological complexity. Ransom is as doctrinaire about his view of woman as, theoretically, Olive should be. Under the pressure of his cousin's opposition, Ransom even goes so far as to write articles propounding his out-moded ideas on the role of the female sex. Where her motives are of the most involved and obscure, his are quite blatant; seeing Verena is impressed by public display, he tries to get in on the act in order to trap her. Verena, whose background is so 'vulgar' that one at first wonders how Olive can countenance the girl, is feminine in the extreme, an apt confirmation of all Ransom's ideas. So limited is Olive's vision, she cannot understand the degree of flexibility which underlies Verena's conduct, cannot appreciate that Verena is afraid of her intense benefactress and will agree to almost any proposition out of sheer fright. Although we are left in little doubt that she is to some extent, using Olive as a means to social advancement, James strives hard to show us that she is an innocent victim of circumstance, attracted to the 'cause'

by her penchant for the theatrical and yet finding it an unhappy place because of her genuine liking for men. Thus, the three characters central to the work are all juggling with public masks in an attempt to cover their personal predilections, elevating their points of disagreement to an ideological level in order to escape the primitive, physical implications.

It is, however, in the picture he gives of the society through which Olive moves that James finds his most effective counterbalance to the dark and devious recesses of her psyche. To put the moribund and imperceptive Miss Birdseye at the centre of this vortex of passion is a master-stroke. Eccentric, unwordly and for ever working with premises several steps from reality, "a confused, entangled, inconsequent, discursive old woman, whose charity began at home and ended nowhere",⁷⁵ she, we are told, knows "less about her fellow-creatures, if possible, after fifty years of humanitarian zeal, than on the day she had gone into the field to testify against the iniquity of most arrangements".⁷⁶ Yet, to Olive, she appears 'heroic and sublime', a symbol of all that is best and most dedicated in the Radical movement. Not only does such admiration suggest how strangely perverted Olive's view of the world may on occasion be, but it throws the whole of the reform movement into comic relief. James gently hints that the public which finds in figures such as this its greatest inspiration and its wisest spokesmen is more than a trifle gullible, willing, in order that it may confirm the Bostonian fame for culture, to tolerate almost any phenomenon. Thus Doctor Tarrant, that most obvious of charlatans, is given considerable acclaim by his Boston audiences whilst Mrs. Farrinder, high-priestess of the movement, may stride about the world followed by a husband so pathetic and so submissive that it is

apparent that she, at least, has no need of organised female supremacy. Ransom is not without authorial support when, after one of Verena's 'inspirational' talks, he reflects on "the crazy nature of an age in which such a performance as that was treated as an intellectual effort".⁷⁷ Olive's immediate circle, too, is subjected to the scathing pen of James, emerging, in its apparent shallowness and frivolity, as something sorely at odds with Olive's essential seriousness:

Individual and original as Miss Chancellor was universally acknowledged to be, she was yet a typical Bostonian, and as a typical Bostonian she could not fail to belong in some degree to a 'set'. ... This little society was rather suburban and miscellaneous; it was prolific in ladies who trotted about, early and late, with books from the Athenaeum nursed behind their muffs, or little nosegays of exquisite flowers that they were carrying as presents to each other.⁷⁸

We become increasingly aware of discrepancy between the fastidiousness which is so marked a part of Olive's character and the rather second-rate people with whom she appears to come into contact through the Radical movement. This mis-match points, of course, to her abuse of her public image, to the fact that she is using the movement as a means to a personal end. Doomed to failure from the outset because of Verena's liking for male company, burdened with a mind which heaps 'scruple upon scruple', forced into situations which torment her highly developed taste, desirous of a martyrdom quite different from the one which she finally suffers, misanthropic in both the general and the particular, prey always to the tortuous workings of 'feminine' logic, she is an apt centre for this picture of the shallow social posturing which is the mark of the Radical movement. What matters is not the movement itself, nor the Bostonian society which encourages it, but the construction which Olive's curious sensibility puts upon this

public phenomenon and the extent to which she attempts to lose her personal idiosyncracies amid the welter of ideology.

For this ingenious son of his age all distinction between the person and the artist had ceased to exist; the writer was personal, the person food for newsboys, and everything and everyone were every one's business. All things, with him, referred themselves to print, and print meant simply infinite reporting, a promptitude of announcement, abusive when necessary, or even when not, about his fellow-citizens. He poured contempt on their private life, on their personal appearance, with the best conscience in the world. His faith, again, was the faith of Salah Tarrant - that being in the newspapers is a condition of bliss, and that it would be fastidious to question the terms of the privilege.⁷⁹

Although Olive's perceptions are central to the book, the public orientation of her 'cover' allows James to legitimately attack aspects of the actual world without breaching his narrative creed. He is not, as the above passage shows, slow to seize upon such opportunities. Where Norris, London and Crane held the job of reporter in fairly high esteem, seeing nothing objectionable in the mere reproduction of detail, James's belief in the importance of the informing sensibility has clearly led him to disparage those who make it their business to impose an insensitive and ill-formed perception on the world around them, reproducing their thoughts for the delectation of those for whom it is sufficient that they see their name in print, regardless of what the context may be. By constructing Olive's private world in such a way that he is frequently called upon to 'impart much occult information' about it, James gives himself a large measure of narrative freedom. He is skilled enough to even underline the extent to which he, as narrator, is informing the book with his own preoccupations:

I mention it not on account of any influence it may have had on the life of Basil Ransom, but for old acquaintance sake and that of local colour; besides which, a figure is nothing without a setting and our young man came and went every day, with rather an indifferent, unperceiving step, it is true, among the objects I have briefly designated.⁸⁰

From this, we see that the public world is playing a slightly altered role in this particular work. Where, normally, the environment would only be present insofar as it had impinged upon the sensibility of the perceiving character, it is included here in spite of Ransom's imperception. This, and the gently ironic treatment which James gives to the Radical movement and Boston society, show that he is aware of the different demands imposed by the writing of a 'topical' work. Having his own, firmly-set views about the actuality, he is prepared to take a more active narrative part, not, on this occasion, to make up for deficiencies in the central perspective so much as to give an air of 'solidity of specification'. One might even go so far as to suggest that in demonstrating his familiarity with his subject in this way James virtually overthrows the rather fey arguments he advanced in The Princess Casamassima about 'feeling in full, personal possession' of an unfamiliar topic. He does not make up for the shortcomings of Hyacinth's vision in nearly so successful a manner as he does for those of Olive. In spite of her determined involvement with such things as public lectures, lady Radicals and gentlemen reporters, we are aware, thanks to the narrator, of how ill such phenomena go with her profound fastidiousness. Doctor Tarrant and Matthias Pardon, Mrs. Farrinder and the crowds flocking to the Music Hall, Mr. Burrage and his mother, all these people are presented to us by the narrator rather than through the eyes of the central character and, collectively, they form a picture of the public world quite

distinct from Olive's perverse vision of it.

The alteration on the role of the public world is not, of course, complete. We still find, in the novel, the same aspects viewed through the eyes of the characters and can, by comparing these observations with those of the author, come to understand how people like Ransom and Olive operate. James is not so unsubtle as to make Ransom wholly admirable in order to show the females as foolish. "As a representative of his sex, (he is) the most important personage in my narrative"⁸¹ is a claim as full of irony as any other made in the book. Ransom is far from being a 'personage', is, indeed, shown to be a somewhat shallow character far out of his rural depths in the intense atmosphere of Boston. His ideals of womanhood come to seem as bigotted as those of the reformers whilst his generous vision of himself lies uneasily alongside his actual failure. It is only when he moves from Boston, pursuing the ladies to their summer retreat, that we see him in a different light, no longer imperceptive about his environment but 'taking possession' of it in the familiar, Jamesian manner.

The train for Marmion left Boston at four o'clock in the afternoon, and rambled fitfully toward the southern cape, while the shadows grew long in the stony pastures and the slanting light gilded the straggling, shabby woods, and painted the ponds and marshes with yellow gleams. The ripeness of summer lay upon the land, and yet there was nothing in the country Basil Ransom traversed that seemed susceptible of maturity; nothing but the apples in the tough, dense orchards, which gave a suggestion of sour fruition here and there, and the tall, bright golden-rod at the bottom of the bare stone dykes. There were no fields of yellow grain; only here and there a crop of brown hay. But there was a kind of soft scrubbiness in the landscape, and a sweetness begotten of low horizons, of mild air, ...⁸²

Entertaining the 'ingenuous' hope that the ladies may have 'left their opinions' in Boston, Ransom relaxes visibly as he enters an area in which he recognises the 'southern quality of that picturesque fatalism'. From the superb descriptive passage above we gather that he is used to scenes of far greater lushness and depth but that he is, as a result of his long sojourn in the inhospitable city, prepared to look around with a positive and open eye. Because we are told that Ransom 'traverses' the country we might assume that the passage is in the narrative voice, with the character moving, imperceiving, across the scene. As, however, we are subsequently told that he 'liked the smell of the soil', that he feels 'refreshed' by the 'taste of the breath of nature', it is safe to assume that the passage is designed to evoke his reawakening responses to his environment. The sense of hope grows as the train nears its destination, lack of fruition shading into soft promise in a way which accurately reflects the changing mood of the perceiving sensibility.

The changes wrought by the influence of a rural environment remind us of how far the atmosphere of the city must impress itself upon the characters and affect their conduct there. In the light of this gentle, almost idyllic passage, the descriptions we have had of the strenuous, rigorous, publicity-conscious world of Boston comes to seem even more powerful and, although, naturally in a far less crude fashion than that of the Naturalists, we begin to see the role which James here allots to the environment is not, in its basic premises about the effect on human behaviour, so far removed from that of Norris or Crane. One must add, of course, that The Bostonians is a special case. Elsewhere, the consciousness of the central character creates its own environment and is, consequently, far less susceptible to

the actual, physical world. Olive Chancellor structures her world along lines overtly dictated by the public world; she is dependent upon it to a far greater extent than Maggie Verver. For this reason, the inclusion of an essentially authorial view of the public world is justifiable on the grounds that, by contrasting this view with that of the central character, one may arrive at a more complete understanding of the latter.

The private world which, although expressive towards and affected by the public world, eventually asserts itself and imposes its own definition, is a phenomenon to be found not only in James's fiction. The American Scene, a record of James's impressions on his return to America after an absence of twenty years, is also firmly based on the intervening sensibility. As F. O. Matthiessen puts it, "What it came down to for James was the presentation, not of a sense of society, but of personal relationships".⁸³ James 'takes possession' of America much as one of his characters would, strolling about, absorbing the life of the streets and bringing to bear a perception long used to subtler European modes. From the tenor and focus of the often cutting comments one can derive an impression of the consciousness analysing the external stimuli and forging them into a singular picture, more eloquent of the consciousness than of the scene itself. James is dogmatic, reactionary and scathing, his bias in favour of the older, mellower European culture apparent in almost every remark. He sees the materialist ethic at work everywhere, despises the mediocrity inherent in a bourgeois society and deplors the soullessness of modern conveniences:

The 'European' scene, at a thousand points, looks all its sophistications straight out at us - or looks, in other words, at least as perverse as it practically is. The American, on the other hand, expressing physiognomically no sophistications at all - though plenty of quite common candours, crudities and vulgarities - makes one ask if the cash-register, the ice-cream freezer, the lightening-elevator, the 'boys' paper' and other such overflows, do truly represent the sum of its passion.⁸⁴

If the scene itself is overly simple, James more than compensates for this by describing it in language of the most elaborate, rococo style. Whether these syntactical serpentines reflect the patterning of James's sophistication is difficult to decide. The apparent informality of the book's design belies its tight structure in which descriptions are so phrased that they become a part of the mainly derogatory commentary and incidents illustrate the validity of the spectator's prejudices. The beholding eye is at once the source of the taut structure and of much bias, "How could one consider a place at all unless in a light? - so that one had to decide definitely on one's light".⁸⁵ This 'light' shows the Public Library in Boston, as being, "committed to speak to one's inner perception still more of the power of the purse and of the higher turn for business than of the old, intellectual, or even of old moral, sense".⁸⁶ It sees the New England villas as 'unmistakably proclaiming' that "they would have cost still more had the way but been shown them",⁸⁷ and it deplores the evident concern with outward show at the expense of privacy, 'the highest luxury of all'. New York skyscrapers become 'the feature that speaks loudest for the economic idea', overshadowing the rest of the scene in a grossly symbolic fashion, and, under this penetrating beam, the whole impetus of American society emerges as:

... that of active pecuniary gain and of active pecuniary gain only - that of making one's conditions so triumphantly pay that the prices, the manners, the other inconveniences take their place as a friction it is comparatively easy to salve, wounds directly treatable with the wash of gold. ... To make so much money that you won't, that you don't 'mind', don't mind anything at all - that is absolutely, I think the main American formula.⁸⁸

However sincere James may be in all he says, such rodomontades as the above suggest that he is to some extent adopting a 'persona', placing between the reader and the author a reactionary Grand Seigneur from whom cutting and pertinent remarks issue with redoubled, and more effective, vehemence. It is not impossible that James would employ such a device, be the employment conscious or unconscious. The intervening sensibility is, in this case, one long-used to creating fictional sensibilities.

Although, as a mid-twentieth century liberal, one feels obliged to descry the limitations of perspective suggested by James's brief and peevish comment on the poor quality of Negro servants, one must give him credit for being so alert as to remark upon certain facets of American life whose pernicious influences only later became pronounced. He gazes askance at the Commercial Travellers, subjecting them to a refined scrutiny which penetrates to the heart of their 'helpless weakness' more effectively than the cruder vision of either Dreiser or Sinclair Lewis. They are, as James deduces, the victims of their own success. Having vanquished all other types, they lack the character-building experience of conflict and comparison and have no criteria by which to establish an alternative view of life, so being caught in a self-perpetuating and increasingly less humane system. Victory, without reference to its intrinsic merit or ultimate effect, is the overriding thing. Their indiscriminating consumption of food

becomes for James a symbol of the omniverous attitude to life.

James also remarked the matriarchal bent. Its source, he noted, was the American male's total preoccupation with business and material gain. All other aspects of life were left, undefended, to be usurped by the female, "thus she arrived, full-blown, on the general scene, the least criticised object, in proportion to her importance, that had ever adorned it".⁸⁹ This 'successful break of universal law' is deprecated on the grounds that, in order to create a live and viable society in which roles are clearly defined, both male and female are required to co-operate. The domination of the female is, James predicts, the road to emasculation and weakening of society.

This society is further threatened by the eruption of the City, "a skeleton at the banquet of life, so gracefully veiled".⁹⁰ He sees Infernal City and Sane Society as but one example of the indiscriminate unions brought about by the 'equalising' pressures of a Democracy whose chief aim is nothing more than the creation of 'huge insignificance'. His account of America ends on a note of despair, "Is the germ of anything agreeably or successfully social, supposably planted in conditions of such stretching and boundless spreading as shall appear finally to minister but to the triumph of superficial and the apotheosis of the raw?"⁹¹

The American Scene may be an overview comprising vast generalisations propounded by an idiosyncratic expatriot, a private world run riot in its condemnation of the public, but, insofar as it demonstrates the actual analytic potential of an individual sensibility, it is a valuable document. Here is proof that the excessively analytic sensibility

is not in itself a creation of James's imagination but merely a reflection of his personal experience of the world as something apprehended only through the medium of a subjective, intellectual 'web'. An overlay of elaborate language and the intervention of an individual sensibility are not necessarily means to obscuring the truth, either about a particular situation or about an entire society. The Naturalists' search for a mode of expression which would not detract from the accuracy of their portrayals took place in the colloquial, scientific and self-consciously 'literary' reaches of language, under the assumption that there was such an animal as 'objective truth' and without apparent reference to the effect of their fictions as finished wholes. By making life and art quite distinct and by making the language of the private world an elaborate affair of metaphor and symbol, James succeeded in putting his fiction nearer the 'truth' of human experience than any oversimplifier or any pseudo-scientist. The sophisticated view, taking into account that action is nothing without perception of that action and therefore substituting perception for action in the fictional world, does not make issues more obscure but merely allows the subjective element to play a part commensurable with its part in 'real' life. Presented with an intervening sensibility whose predispositions and prejudices are known to us, we are more likely to apprehend any situation in all its elements and so judge it more accurately than if we were merely given a description of action and environment and left to deduce the connections for ourselves. The resulting book is liable to be tightly structured, for the extent and the shape of the public world's part is dictated by the perceiving private world and extraneous detail is present only in proportion to its effect on the perceiver. Thus, the overall fictional reality is a function of a dominant, though not

necessarily exclusive, private world. Language, overall structure, public world and theme become coherent and interrelated, focussed on the private world which is at once the source of their shape and the thing to which they give shape.

It has been noted that James's approach demands that he deals in characters responsive to their environment and alive to its implications. In Maggie Verver and Christopher Newman we witness the growth of perception and in the Baroness Munster, its failure. What Maisie Knew examines a sensibility operating without the benefit of a frame of reference with which to interpret the world it sees and The Princess Casamassima shows a sensibility thrown out of its accustomed frame into the arms of one diametrically opposed. Whatever the situation, the central consciousness is always receptive and analytic; but the situations themselves tend, in the interests of heightened effect, always to be in some way extreme. Maggie Verver, Hyacinth, Newman, Fleda Vetch, Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady and Strether in The Ambassadors are all faced by mutually exclusive choices which act as a spur to the operation of their sensibilities. And even these sensibilities themselves tend to encompass emotional extremes; both Olive Chancellor and Isabel Archer enjoy a sort of perverted innocence which survives, or exists in spite of, actual experience and even the apparently dull Catherine Sloper has a stolidity and patience so extreme that they become virtues where once they were vices. Thus, extremity is the key-note, whether it is a case of extreme sensibility leading into extreme situation or, as is the case with The Ambassadors and The American extreme, that is alien, situation leading to extreme states of mind.

Structure, is so subjectively-orientated fiction, is of course paramount if the finished work is to be a coherent whole. We have already noted, especially in The Golden Bowl, James's use of recurrent images suggestive of states of mind, we have seen how he links environment, notably houses and gardens, to the mental 'sets' of his characters and how objects come to symbolise whole areas of experience. When characters wander through streets, the things they remark are significant indicators of their moods; shifting states of mind are stabilised by brief 'tableaux' and outward, physical appearances lose currency under the subjective scrutiny of a character who translates the world into terms of metaphor and simile eloquent of a unique body of experience and a singular outlook. James rests the weight of his fiction on the 'most operative even if the least reasoned' area of human experience, eschewing mere 'report' on environment and action in favour of the medium which gives meaning to both. It has been said that this concern with form leads to a formal involvement with his characters rather than an emotional response to their plights.⁹² But form and content are one in James and, as both centre on the affective domain, it is difficult to see how this claim could be substantiated. What we are involved with, if we are involved at all, is the sensibility of the central character, its emotions, rationalisations and perceptions, and our responses, as much as those of the character, are dictated by the author. James does not allow us space in which to construct our own, imaginative or emotional, interpretations, and it is to these, surely that one refers when one talks of 'emotional responses' on the part of the reader, a personal empathy with the possibilities of feelings inferred by the 'intervening sensibility' of the reader, not of the character.

A splendid example of just such intervention is to be found in the vexed question of sexual aberration in James. To the post-Freudian, post-Jungian mind, James might appear to be evincing a remarkable degree of prudery in not pointing out to us that, of course, both Gilbert Osmond and Adam Verver are impotent, that Isabel Archer and Maggie Verver are frigid and that the governess in 'The Turn of the Screw' is subject to hallucinations brought on by sexual frustration. The intervening sensibility of the reader is capable of just such wild inductions and is even liable to accuse James of a prurient interest in sexual perversity. However true any of these things may be, they are irrelevant. Were it important that the reader notice Adam Verver's impotence, then James would no doubt have made it as apparent as Olive's lesbianism. Where something is omitted in a Jamesian novel, one does not have to look far for the reasons for omission. Maggie Verver was unlikely to enquire into the sex life of her father and therefore it is not pertinent. Strenuous inductive effort may, in the case of the loosely-knit proximites of the Naturalists, be justified on the grounds that their works are but poor indicators of what they intended. However, in the case of so polished and so conscientious a craftsman as James, the critical task becomes purely analytic.

The private world as portrayed by James is a powerful and capricious instrument, possessed of depths far beyond those suggested by the external aspect of its owner and taking its shape neither from environment nor heredity in any quantifiable measure, but being susceptible to these and other influences in varying, highly individual ways. What debt James owes to the nascent science of psychology is difficult to discover, for he has so thoroughly made the private

world 'his own'. On the basis of the sensibility manifest in The American Scene, one might well contend that James relied more on introspection for his knowledge of the basic processes of perception than on any text-book, translating this self-awareness, by means of imagination and the careful analysis of the methods and implications of fiction, into novels whose value has not diminished, in spite of a vastly changed 'public' world, because they are firmly rooted in the universal and eternal soil of subjective perception. One feels that whilst the Naturalists might well have been found in the library at Waterbath, James would have merited pride of place in Poynton.

NOTES

1. Henry James, 'The New Novel' (1914) in Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira, Peregrine Books (Middlesex, 1968), p.358
2. Henry James, The Princess Casamassima, 1st pub. 1881, this ed. Perennial Classic (New York, 1966), p.11
3. Casamassima, p.9
4. 'The New Novel', in op. cit., p.366
5. Casamassima, p.11
6. 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), in op. cit., p.85
7. 'The Art of Fiction', in op. cit., pp.86-87
8. 'The Art of Fiction', in op. cit., p.85
9. Henry James, The American, 1st pub. (New York, 1877), this ed. Signet Classic (New York, 1963), p.6
10. The American, p.7
11. The American, p.152
12. The American, p.117
13. The American, p.150
14. The American, p.126
15. The American, p.126
16. The American, p.171
17. The American, p.254
18. The American, p.223
19. The American, p.7
20. F. W. Dupee, Henry James, American Men of Letters Series (London, 1951), p.100
21. Henry James, The Europeans, 1st pub. 1878, this ed., 2nd ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1967), p.36
22. The Europeans, p.4
23. The Europeans, p.56
24. The Europeans, p.133
25. The Europeans, p.45

26. The Europeans, p.129
27. The Europeans, p.41
28. The Europeans, p.109
29. The Europeans, p.114
30. Henry James, The Golden Bowl, 1st pub. Scribner (New York, 1904)
this ed. Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1966), p.34
31. Golden Bowl, p.33
32. Golden Bowl, p.330
33. Golden Bowl, p.48
34. Golden Bowl, p.329
35. Golden Bowl, p.315
36. Golden Bowl, p.301
37. Golden Bowl, p.329
38. Golden Bowl, p.301
39. Golden Bowl, p.456
40. Golden Bowl, p.430
41. Casamassima, p.10
42. Dupee, op. cit., p.158
43. Casamassima, p.19
44. Casamassima, p.136
45. Casamassima, p.249
46. Casamassima, p.242
47. Casamassima, p.302
48. Casamassima, p.259
49. Casamassima, p.260
50. Casamassima, p.126
51. Casamassima, p.407
52. Casamassima, p.59
53. Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, 1st pub. 1881, this ed.,
3rd ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1968), p.252

54. Portrait, p.61
55. Portrait, p.59
56. Portrait, pp.286-287
57. Portrait, p.287
58. Portrait, p.62
59. Portrait, p.126
60. Portrait, p.127
61. Portrait, p.61
62. Portrait, p.39
63. Portrait, p.350
64. Portrait, p.352
65. Henry James, The Bostonians, 1st pub. Macmillan (New York, 1886)
this ed., 2nd ed. Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1969), p.13
66. Bostonians, p.13
67. Bostonians, p.13
68. Bostonians, p.15
69. Bostonians, p.15
70. Bostonians, p.105
71. Bostonians, p.139
72. Bostonians, p.354
73. Bostonians, p.355
74. Bostonians, p.358
75. Bostonians, p.25
76. Bostonians, p.25
77. Bostonians, p.232
78. Bostonians, p.154
79. Bostonians, p.107
80. Bostonians, p.160
81. Bostonians, p.6
82. Bostonians, p.298

83. F. O. Matthiessen, Henry James, The Major Phase, A Galaxy Book (New York, 1963), p.139
84. Henry James, The American Scene, 1st pub. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906), this ed., ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert-Hart Davis, 1956), p.312
85. Scene, p.248
86. Scene, pp.248-249
87. Scene, p.11
88. Scene, pp.236-237
89. Scene, p.348
90. Scene, p.284
91. Scene, p.465
92. Sallie Sears, The Negative Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.31

CHAPTER THREE

Edith Wharton and Sinclair Lewis

To look at Henry James and Edith Wharton in the light of our 'public and private worlds' dichotomy is to see them as authors differing profoundly in their approaches to the art of writing. Where James, as we have seen, structures his works exclusively around the subjective responses of his characters, Edith Wharton rests the weight of her fictional reality on a public world so pervasive in its influences that such private worlds as the characters possess become little more than varied responses to its dictates. In spite of what, under our terms, is a vast and obvious difference in basic method, many critics have maintained that Mrs. Wharton was merely a pale imitator of James¹ and others, notably Richard M. Chase, have assumed that they share the same approach to the structuring of their fictional realities. According to Chase,² James is the one 'great' novelist of manners to be produced by American literature whilst Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis and Scott Fitzgerald are second-raters from the same school. One might suggest that the need to deal in the unsatisfactory terms of 'best' and 'second-best' would be avoided if one were equipped with critical tools incisive enough to expose the radical differences between these authors. Our dichotomy enables us to penetrate beyond the surface similarity to a level where James may be seen, not as the yardstick against which the others fail to measure up, but as an author whose approach to the basic structuring of fictional reality is sufficiently distinct from that of the others to render direct, evaluative comparison irrelevant.

Chase defines the 'novel of manners' in the following way:

It is distinguished from the novel in general because it concentrates so calculatedly on manners, because it focusses on a particular social class or group of classes above the lower economic levels, and because it has an affinity in tone and method with the high comedy of the stage. Most important of all, such moral standards as are advanced by the author are those of society (probably not those of any one class) or have, at least, concrete social sanction and utility.³

Whilst one would agree that, with the exception of The Princess Casamassima, James wrote exclusively of 'social classes above the lower economic levels' and concede that he was in no sense an advocate of eccentric moral standards, one is left to question whether such sweeping generalisations make any meaningful link between Mrs. Wharton and Henry James. The definition, hinging as it does on broad similarities in subject-matter, an ill-defined notion of the comic element and an assumption about moral standards, seems incomplete in the scant attention it pays to the manner in which the novels are structured. In Jamesian terms, it is the 'treatment' which is paramount, not only to the author in writing the novel but also to the critic in analysing it.

All of which is not to deny the place of broad generalisations in the study of literature. They can be useful aids to analysis, but only when they are based on something more than the slightest of superficial resemblances. In the opening chapter of this thesis, the term 'naturalistic novel' was used to describe only those works which empirical analysis showed to be structured around the new, scientific insights into the nature of man and his relationship with his environment. It was this crucial element and not such superficial resemblances as the economic class of the characters which was used to gauge the appropriateness of the label. There is no such

fundamental link between the works of Mrs. Wharton and those of Henry James. As further study will show, the form was, in a sense, straddling the gulf separating the Jamesian and the naturalistic novel, bringing a degree of literary polish and an awareness of form, reminiscent of the former, to bear on characters seen very largely as products of their environments and pawns of Fate, a view recalling the latter. This is not to suggest that Edith Wharton was either the sole or the deliberate instigator of this fusion of extremes. Her definite, disparaging vision of society led as naturally to the propagandist element in her fiction as the polished social world of which she wrote led to the refinement of tone. Her pervasive public world, arranged in hierarchic form and based on a flexible amalgam of cash and social cachet, delineates private worlds intent on practical, social ends which rarely allow themselves the 'luxury' of actions, or even thoughts, counter to those approved by society. As a result, characters tend to be shallow, mere puppets in a game far larger than their individual selves, and the reader is directed toward a critical appraisal of the game as opposed to the contemplation of the vagaries of private worlds reacting to social pressures. The works of Sinclair Lewis could be analysed in similar fashion for neither author sets out to weave complex fictional tapestries around the idiosyncratic perceptions of individuals powerful enough to impose their definition on the public world. Both present the reader with limited private worlds, placed within the context which is the well-spring of their limitations, a juxtaposition enlivened by satire and designed to elicit criticism of the context rather than a response to the individual private world.

The limitations inherent in such an approach are more evident in the works of Mrs. Wharton than those of Sinclair Lewis. Where her

characters tend to conform to social specifications in a calculated, unemotional way, Lewis's enjoy a more organic relationship to their backgrounds, either embracing them with whole-hearted delight, as Babbitt does, or attempting to change them in some way, as Carol Kenicott, and, briefly, Babbitt, try to do. Although Babbitt's 'rebellion' and Carol's schemes of reform may do no more than highlight how far each character is dependent on his social milieu, they at least point to a more active involvement with the public world than that of Mrs. Wharton's creations, restrained as they are by a society antipathetic to emotional reactions. But, in both cases, the actions and reactions of the characters are designed more as a means to indicting their respective societies than as ways of portraying subjective realities. Unlike Jamesian characters, these figures are possessed by rather than active possessors of their worlds and, on the whole, their interpretations of the world are as much a part of that world as its institutions. Their sensibilities are not limited in the same way as the sensibilities of characters in naturalistic novels but, because they crave to belong to certain societies, they must learn to speak the language of those societies. Hence, the practical worth of objects is subsumed by the social cachet attached to them; they have been selected by their owners on neither practical nor aesthetic grounds but because they are necessary prerequisites for, and indications of, a position in the hierarchy. This restriction in choice is symptomatic of the entire system, a system whose demands penetrate to the heart of those conformist characters who are its mainstay. In dress, in intonation, in behaviour and in deed they are its creatures, deprived of the individual right to re-structure the public world by their own willingness to conform.

Lily Bart, heroine of Mrs. Wharton's The House of Mirth (1905), shows some sort of individuality and it is clear that the reader is intended to see her fall from the graces of New York society as a condemnation of that society. The book also strives hard to prove that the 'levels' to which so much importance is attached are not differences of kind but of degree. Where Lily fails to shape society to her own ends, Undine Spragg, the heroine of The Custom of the Country (1913) seizes upon it with her parvenu's hands and, ignorant of all the subtleties inherent in so 'old' a set-up, bends it to her will. Undine is so thoroughly insensitive and unlikeable that the society which bows to her stands convicted of a lapse of taste. In The Age of Innocence (1920), Mrs. Wharton goes some way towards redressing the balance; instead of attacking the society of her youth, she portrays it with some gentleness and humour, seeing its rigid rules as a defence for the moral and social innocence of its members. The Reef (1912) is structured somewhat differently from her other novels. In it, the private worlds of the characters play the major role, their sensibilities dictating the structure of the overall fictional reality which is, for once, not designed to comment on an actual public world. By including this novel, it is hoped to show that the effects of altering the balance between public and private worlds are crucial to the artistic merits of a novel. Mrs. Wharton is one of the few writers to use two radically different balances in the course of her career and her works are, therefore, admirably suited for such a comparison.

The public world predominates in The House of Mirth (1905), in spite of the critically-minded and individualistic heroine. Lily Bart's 'martyrdom' at the hands of upper-middle class New York society is

largely brought about by herself. Her failure to act in the prescribed manner undoubtedly leads to her gradual exclusion but, because she is so desirous of remaining a part of the increasingly hostile whole and because her actions stem less from an inability to accept the rules and more from the frustration of petty, personal desires, the reader cannot see her fall as an indictment of the public world. We realise that we are intended to sympathise with her on the grounds that she has more humanity and 'natural' sympathy than those around her. Her humanitarian impulses are, however, fitful and far less striking than her vanity and her much-vaunted 'taste'. Mrs. Wharton tries to justify Lily's dependence on this second-rate public world by resorting to arguments reminiscent of the Naturalists, describing her in turns as "the victim of the civilisation that had produced her",⁴ a person "in whom the social habit is instinctive"⁵ and suggesting that there is a dichotomy between her 'natural' and her 'social' self, "as though she were a captured dryad subdued to the conventions of the drawing-room".⁶ She is not, however, merely the passive victim of convention but is a past-mistress in the art of using them to gain ends which strike her as desirable:

Of course it was shocking for a married woman to borrow money - Lily was expertly aware of the implications involved - but still, it was mere *malum prohibitum* which the world descries but condones and which, though it may be punished by private vengeance, does not provoke the collective disapprobation of society.⁷

Such willingness to exploit the double moral standard of her public world, together with her 'expert awareness' of the codes, does nothing to make the reader admire Lily. Her cynicism about the social scene is as fitful as her humanitarianism and it lies uneasily alongside

the tremendous efforts she makes to retain her place in society. As she descends the social ladder rung by rung, she is hastened in her downward course by "all her instinctive resistances, of taste, of training, of blind inherited scruple".⁸ In other words, she is too much of a snob to accept the hospitality offered by those slightly lower down the scale. We are left to wonder where Mrs. Wharton wishes us to apportion blame. Lily is not, in the naturalistic sense, a 'victim'; she all too often demonstrates her ability to make discriminations and to take independent action. The pen which creates the splendid collection of 'social animals' who occupy the centre of the ring, does not spare Lily Bart. Like Basil Ransom, she is capable of over-generously interpreting herself and her motives, believing her mind to be 'above narrow prejudice' and being 'severely logical in tracing the causes of her ill-luck to others'. She is vain, taking endless pleasure in the admiration of her fellows, and so limited in her outlook that "moral complications existed for her only in the environment that had produced them".⁹ This last remark is especially damning and proves that Mrs. Wharton cannot achieve the impossible task of making Lily depend upon a world of petty considerations without, at the same time, making her seem trivial. Were she truly a superior being, then she would simply abandon the whole circus in favour of an alternative form of life, such as the charitable one followed by Gerty.

The dramatic conflict in The House of Mirth does not take place in the consciousness of its central character. We are given but one, brief Jamesian glimpse into the further reaches of Lily's sensibility, "her personal fastidiousness had a moral equivalent, and when she made a tour of inspection in her own mind, there were certain closed doors

she did not open".¹⁰ Unlike the 'doors' which Maggie Verver discovers, these remain firmly shut in the face of reader and character alike. The subjugation of the private world to the public is complete and such dramatic interest as is found in the novel resides in the conflicting levels of society, each with its subtly different set of prejudices and customs, "Society is a revolving body which is apt to be judged according to its place in each man's heaven".¹¹ The judgement is, of course, prejudiced by the nature of the body itself; there are differences of degree, latitudes to which one may aspire, but the arrangement of the firmament is not open to question. Mrs. Wharton uses Lily's descent from the splendour of Bellomont to the tawdriness of a boarding-house to show how trivial and arbitrary the gradations are and to show how they act as cover for the human failings of vanity and greed:

The Gormer milieu represented a social outskirts which Lily had always fastidiously avoided: but it struck her, now that she was in it, as only a flamboyant copy of her own world, a caricature approximating the real thing as the 'society play' approaches the manner of the drawing room ... the differences lay in a hundred shades of aspect and manner. ... Everything was pitched in a higher key, and there was more of each thing.¹²

Even this realisation does not shake Lily's faith in the whole arrangement.

In order to strike home her condemnation of the entire, artificial social world, Mrs. Wharton is forced to make Lily leap from the bottom rung to the 'ground' far below. It is, as Richard Poirier

remarks in 'Edith Wharton: The House of Mirth',⁽¹⁾ something of a literary commonplace to see the lower economic strata as repositories of all that is good, humane and 'real', and it is to this that Mrs. Wharton finally resorts, making a use of coincidence as lavish in its improbability as anything to be found in the works of the Naturalists. Alone and despairing, Lily is happened upon by Nelly, a beneficiary of the former's infrequent philanthropy. Seeing Nelly's security and happiness brings Lily, somewhat tardily, into contact with the humane realities of life, the gratification of a child lying trustfully in her arms and the awareness that it is possible to have relationships in which the investment of time and emotion is not calculated to the last cent of social currency:

She had a sense of deeper impoverishment - of an inner destitution compared with which outward conditions dwindled into insignificance. ... That was the feeling which possessed her now - the feeling of being something rootless and ephemeral And as she looked back she saw that there had never been a time when she had had any real relation to life. ... there was no centre of early pieties, of grave endearing traditions, to which her heart could revert and from which it could draw strength for itself and tenderness for others. In whatever form the slowly-accumulated past lives in the blood ... it has the same power of broadening and deepening the individual existence, of attaching to it by mysterious links of kinship to all the mighty sum of human striving.¹³

This sudden, analytic plunge leaves Lily with no alternative to

(1) "The relationship between the life impulse and the lower orders is common in literature". (Richard Poirier, *Edith Wharton: The House of Mirth* in *The American Novel*, ed. Wallace Stegner (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p.123. Dickens, of course, springs to mind as one noted for the use of this commonplace. In American literature, one might cite Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and elsewhere, William Dean Howells in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and so on as examples of the practice. Some critics, notably James Baldwin, have accused Faulkner of treating the figure of Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* in like fashion. Such an assumption is disproved by the analysis of the novel in Chapter VII below.

suicide, for she has shown all along that she cannot survive in soil whose chief constituent is not solid materialism and that she has not the private resources with which to re-structure her world along sentimental lines. Her tragedy, if it can be looked at in these terms, is that she cannot escape from the environment which has shaped her yet which, in some ways, she deplors. This conflict does not emerge with any force from the book. Lily's feelings take the form of discriminations born of taste and fastidiousness, not of humane impulses, and the reader finds it difficult to take the differences between the various levels of society as seriously as Lily does. Lacking any clue to her private world, we fail to appreciate the tensions inherent in the descent down a social ladder whose rungs seem so closely allied. Yet, there seems little doubt that Mrs. Wharton meant us to 'feel for' Lily in her decline, and at the same time to deplore the set-up upon which she depended for existence. This complex juggling with our sympathies does not work and is, in fact, hindered by a certain ambivalence on the part of the author. Describing a society which attaches so much importance to outward appearances, she is nevertheless prepared to endorse judgements based on appearance. Selden says, early in the book, that the qualities which 'distinguished Lily from the herd of her sex were chiefly external' and talks of "that incommunicable grace which is the bodily counterpart of genius"¹⁴ without contradiction from the author. Social deterministic arguments do not ring true at this elevated level. We may be told that "Inherited tendencies had combined with early training to make her the highly specialized product she was",¹⁵ but we cannot accept that the very discriminating Lily lacks the personal capacity to break free from this mould, or at least to reach some form of compromise between personal and social

needs. She is guilty of ill-judgment, in spite of her reactions on encountering Nelly, society had not, for her, been without its 'traditions and pieties' and her late, uncharacteristic impulse towards a less selfish and a less class-conscious existence cannot be taken as proof that she has been victimised by her previous public world. Her sporadic criticisms do not amount to proof of superiority, nor does her failure to conform make her a victim.

Undine Spragg, parvenu extraordinary, is a more fitting and less problematic medium for the condemnation of the public world. It has been said that Mrs. Wharton 'hates Undine too much',¹⁶ and so presents an unconvincing picture of the forces threatening the traditional configurations of New York society. This argument, however, seems to be based more on a historical or sociological understanding of the attitudes prevailing at this period than on the actual characters in the novel itself. They, like the figures in The House of Mirth are in large part reduced to the broad outlines of caricature, worthless game. This is especially true of the men who, in both novels, serve more as the formal, ideal focus of the lives of the women than as actual arbiters of their conduct. Selden's eccentric, heretical views on society are as much a part of the pattern dictated by that phenomenon as George Dorset's tolerance of his wife's infidelities. Although neither sex could be said to have charge of the social set-up, the women play a more active and aggressive role. Thus, when men submit to Undine's charms both they and she are doing no more than fulfilling the parts allotted to them by a public world which, being portrayed in broadly comic terms, can encompass the degree of exaggeration required to make Miss Spragg's attraction seem plausible.

As in The House of Mirth, the public world which dominates The Custom of the Country (1913) is concerned almost exclusively with outward appearance. This enables little Undine Spragg from Apex, armed only with her stunning good-looks and her boundless selfishness, to run the gamut of New York society, dazzling the male population and mounting the social ladder by using them as rungs. She first marries the gentle, unwordly Ralph Marvell for his impeccable lineage, only to discard him when she finds that such distinctions as her 'girlish categories' had lead her to make were false, "she found out that she had given herself to the exclusive and the dowdy when the future belonged to the showy and promiscuous".¹⁷ Disposing of Marvell and her child, she quits New York for Paris, undergoing in the transition none of the refinements of perspective usually associated with it, for Undine is more firmly fixed in her personal definition than such characters as Christopher Newman, Lambert Strether or even Samuel Dodsworth. Although all three have devoted their lives in America to practical, business pursuits, they are not so lacking in the ability to expand their sympathies and reform their world views in response to altered circumstances as Undine. Newman's exaggeratedly 'typical' behaviour may, in itself, be seen as a response to the subtly different social modes of Europe; Strether's consciousness is so expanded in Paris that it alters the perceptions of a lifetime and Dodsworth too comes to see his home and his wife, his country and his friends, in a totally new light. Undine, however, continues to be restricted in her vision by "that image of herself in other minds which was her only notion of self-seeing",¹⁸ making only such concessions as are forced upon her by her will to succeed. That this egotism survives the transplantation from one society to another makes the reader feel that, once again, Mrs. Wharton's heroine does not fulfil her allotted

role in the overall fictional reality. In the absence of overt, social deterministic argument, one is tempted to condemn Undine as an individual rather than as a typical product of a despicable system. Yet, because it is the system rather than the character which is intended to attract the blame, the character, viewed as an individual, is unconvincing in her thoroughgoing selfishness and her abuse of her child and her husbands in her own interests. The inadequacy of her private world is evident to the last:

She had everything she wanted, but still felt, at times, that there were other things which she might want if she knew about them. ... Now and then she caught herself thinking that his two predecessors (husbands two and three) - who were gradually becoming merged in her memory - would have said this or that differently, behaved otherwise in such and such a case. And the comparison was almost always to Moffat's disadvantage. 19

As in The House of Mirth, the public world in this novel is carefully divided into various 'levels'. Undine and her parents are the new rich, welcomed into the claustrophobic world of upper middle-class New York society precisely because they have money. Like the Bellegardes in The American, the Marvells have to overcome certain ingrained 'resistances of taste' before making the inviting gesture. That they find it less difficult than the Bellegardes is in part the reason for Mrs. Wharton's condemnation of them, although it is the attacking force of the new rich which bears the brunt of her disapproval. She does not, as James does, make the clash appear in the consciousnesses of individual characters who may be largely unaware of the well-springs of their attitudes, but she implants in the midst of the book a character whose sociological bent is intended to make him an apt commentator on the scene. It is interesting that Charles Bowen's comments are reminiscent of those found in James's The

American Scene, a factual work, rather than of those made by any Jamesian narrator in fiction.

It's normal for a man to work hard for a woman - what's abnormal is his not caring to tell her anything about it. ... Because it's against the custom of the country. And whose fault is that? The man's again. ... homo sapiens Americanus. Why haven't we taught our women to take an interest in our work? Simply because we don't take enough interest in them. ... To slave for a woman is part of the old American tradition; lots of people give their lives for dogmas they've ceased to believe in. Then again, in this country, the passion for making money has preceded the knowing how to spend it, and the American man lavishes his fortune on his wife because he doesn't know what else to do with it.²⁰

James, as we have seen, had anticipated Bowen by some nine years when he deprecated the pursuit of money for its own sake and noted that "the business-man, in the United States, may ... never hope to be anything but a business-man"²¹ and that he is 'subject and plastic to his mate'. This explicit, social theorising shows not only the importance which Mrs. Wharton attaches to the organisation of the public world, but also to the degree to which her overall fictional reality is prejudiced against the active private world capable of commenting on that public world. Bowen, the theorist, and *Undine*, the example, are intended to cumulatively condemn.

According to Bowen, Ralph Marvell exemplifies a doomed order and, contemplating him 'with the pangs of a sociologist over the individual havoc wrought by an social re-adjustment', the theorist concludes that he is "a survival, and destined, as such, to go down in any conflict with the rising force".²² Although at times demonstrating a close kinship with the Naturalists, Mrs. Wharton does not construct her novel along Spencerian lines; there is no inverse proportion visible in the

rise of Undine and the fall of Marvell. But, as one heading for social extinction, Ralph is allowed to possess more of a private world than many of the other characters, finding, in the stagnating pool that is his social world, both the time and the opportunity for reflection. Yet even the fruits of this reflection owe more to the negation of his publically given perspective than to any assertion of individuality. Shaken as "the whole archaic structure of his rites and sanctions tumbled down about him",²³ he goes through a brief period of heightened perception, seeing the world coloured by the torment of private suffering:

The blindness within him seemed to have intensified his physical perceptions, his sensitiveness to the heat, the noise, the smells of the dishevelled midsummer city; but combined with the acuter perception of these offenses was a complete indifference to them, as though he were some vivisected animal deprived of the power of discrimination.²⁴

The brevity and futility of this exercise of private sensibility bears witness to the consistency of Mrs. Wharton's desire to structure her work around the public world. Like Lily Bart, Marvell lacks the private resource to cope with the overthrow of his traditional, received view of the world. The sensibility which here plays over the physical scene is as confused and as self-engrossed as that of the Prince at the outset of The Golden Bowl. But, where James uses Amerigo's failure to notice salient 'things' around him as a means to suggesting his habitual perspective and, at the same time, to make the new saliences eloquent of his ongoing state of mind, Mrs. Wharton can only suggest that Marvell would not, in normal circumstances, have responded to the street scene and attempt to imply that the heightened sensitivity in some way mirrors his sense of displacement. Hence,

we see that in the public worlds of her books, both characters and 'objects' need the formal sanction of organised society before they may become meaningful. The social set-up, its mores, traditions and taboos, is the sole giver of shape and direction and, even when the narrator wishes to suggest that there is something inherently bad about that set-up, she does not attempt to re-structure it or suggest a viable alternative, either through the private worlds of her characters or by direct, narrative intervention.

The emphasis is ever on characters who are passive in face of the public world; their inability to affect the course of their lives is reflected in the linear patterning of the plots, both in the two novels so far discussed and in The Age of Innocence (1920), whilst a dominating narrative voice renders interior monologue superfluous. In these respects, Mrs. Wharton has much in common with the Naturalists, although, of course, she is less concerned with the 'basic' than the social instinct. Dealing with a more articulate group of characters, she can to some extent integrate her deterministic bent with the fictional structure by allowing them to expound the theory. This does not, however, prevent her from using terms identical to those employed by Norris et al. As Lily faces the inebriated Gus Trenor, we are told that, "her recoil of abhorrence had called out the primitive man"²⁵ and Undine is accustomed to seeing "primitive man looking out of the eyes from which frock-coated gentlemen usually pined at her".²⁶ The evasive treatment of sexual matters may, in part, be seen as a reflection of the attitude current in the society of which she wrote. We may gauge, from talk of Undine's dislike of personal entanglements' and her 'impersonal affection' for Ralph, together with her vain reaction to the news of her pregnancy, that

she is sexually cold, merely using the outward trappings of sexuality in her bid to master the public world. Lily too, with her deep delight in exhibiting her person, places a tacit reliance on the 'primitive' responses of men. Thus, the very voice which is intent on criticising the hypocrisies of the public world is itself subject to a similar, if not an identical, set of 'nice' conventions. Like Sinclair Lewis, Mrs. Wharton tends to use her satire in a purely destructive, negative way, laying bare the shallowness and the folly without implying a sound alternative. The rapid excursion into a world materially impoverished but spiritually flourishing at the end of The House of Mirth is perhaps evidence that the writer was aware of the need for an alternative, although she could not satisfactorily answer it. James avoided such wholesale negation of values by laying his emphasis on private worlds which could create their own systems of social worth by imposing personal structures on the public world.

Destructive analysis without saving synthesis finally drove Mrs. Wharton to look for the positive aspect of the very society which she had so often disparaged. The Age of Innocence, written fifteen years after The House of Mirth, is the result of this constructive drive. The period and the society are identical to those appearing in the previous two novels, there is a gallery of caricature 'social animals' and the public eye is as censorious and as restrictive of individual freedom as before. What distinguishes the book is the elevation of the private world of one of the characters. Initially critical but tolerant of the public world, Newland Archer comes to actively oppose it, mercilessly rejecting its shams and hypocrisies when he finds that its 'conventional' attitude to the Europeanised Ellen Olenska is inappropriate according to his personal vision of her. One can

discern the influence of James in this. The introduction of a perspective long used to subtler, European modes and the active opposition of the private to the public view bespeak a recourse to a Jamesian reformation of the overall fictional reality. It is through the narrative voice and the interventions of Ellen herself that the reader comes to realise that Newland's wholesale rejection is wrong. The public world is designed in such a way that it affords protection to its naïve, innocent inhabitants who are incapable of coping with the irregular and the immoral save by rule of thumb. Although Newland, like Babbitt, returns to the fold, he is never wholly reconciled with its enclosing, protective policies; it is left to the reader to appreciate how far such limitations are the necessary result of the nature of the sheltering innocents and whether, in the light of the degraded European modes, they may even appear laudable.

In matters intellectual and artistic Newland Archer felt himself distinctly the superior of these chosen specimens of old New York gentility; he had probably read more, thought more, and even seen a great deal more of the world, than any other man of the number. Singly they betrayed their inferiority; but grouped together they represented 'New York', and the habit of masculine solidarity made him accept their doctrine in all the issues called moral. He instinctively felt it would be troublesome - and also rather bad form - to strike out for himself.²⁷

This unadventurous complacency does not recommend Newland's vision to the reader and, indeed, serves very much to show how far he is a product of the public world. His brief flirtation with a married woman does not convince the reader that he is more worldly than the rest, no more does the fact that his reading list has included such writers as Darwin and Spencer necessarily point to a greater breadth of vision. He is content to operate in a world where "the real

thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs".²⁸ It is only when he finds himself in personal disagreement with the public world that his humorous and theoretical disaffection becomes active and practical. Predisposed to think that he has a better understanding of the erring married woman, personally involved with Ellen, regarding his fiancée as a creature of 'false' purity preserved by society in order that the male may have the pleasure of destroying her innocence, his covert criticisms become overt and he asks Ellen to run away with him. Ironically, her refusal is based on an argument he had advanced in favour of the public world:

... it was you who made me understand that under the dullness there are things so fine and sensitive and delicate that even those I cared for most look cheap in comparison. ... it seems as if I'd never before understood with how much that is hard and shabby and base the most exquisite pleasures may be paid for.²⁹

It is clear that, by balancing the European with the American vision, Mrs. Wharton is treating the subject in more depth than she had done elsewhere. The cultural clash comes to be embodied in the sensibilities of two characters and the issues, although, perhaps, more complex and clouded, are better integrated with the overall fictional reality thanks to this exercise of private perspective.

Ellen stays Newland's headlong flight from his habitual milieu by insisting that "they should not break faith with the people who trusted them",³⁰ showing that her tolerant and profound vision, born of the Old World, is more able to appreciate the essential value of the cold, ideal moral codes of the New than any home-grown one. Thus, in spite of its petty hypocrisies and tyrannical rule, the

public world emerges as the creation of naïve and innocent people, their defence against a multiplicity of irregular things with which they are not equipped to deal save by massed conformity to standards. Newland is left to retreat into a private reality, no longer able to accept the public vision, yet not so lacking in personal resource that his sole alternative is suicide:

He had built up within himself a kind of sanctuary in which she (Ellen) was throned among his secret thoughts and longings. Little by little, it became the scene of his real life, of his only rational activities; thither he brought the books he read, the ideas and feelings which nourished him, his judgements and visions. Outside it, in the scene of his actual life, he moved with a growing sense of unreality and insufficiency, blundering against familiar prejudices and traditional points of view. ... so absent from everything most densely real and near to those about him that it sometimes startled him to find that they still imagined he was there.³⁴

This final assertion of the viability, if not the worth, of the eccentric private world reflects how far Mrs. Wharton had moved in The Age of Innocence from the satiric standpoint she adopted in her earlier works. It is interesting to note that Ralph has succeeded in forming a yardstick against which he may measure both himself and the ideas he encounters, a positive step forward from his early, egocentric assumptions of his own superiority. He does not come to impose his own definition on the public world in the active manner of a Maggie Verver. Assuming that those around him act and react in private as they do in public, he has no reason to suspect that the world is structured in other than its most overt way and there is no need for elaborate interpretative effort in considering the conduct of others. He is possessed, from the outset, of the key to their simple, hieroglyphic codes. The eccentric visions of Ellen and old Mrs. Mingott, one culturally alien and the other based on the privi-

leges attendant on great age, are presented to him quite openly. His private world, therefore, need only become a retreat, not the active instrument by means of which the public world may be re-structured.

As befits her approach to the art of writing Mrs. Wharton eschews the intricate use of place and environment as symbolic analogies for states of mind although, as co-author of a 'bible' on interior decorating, she shows a keen eye for the nuances of background.⁽¹⁾

Hence, when Newland notices that Ellen 'places' two Jaqueminot roses instead of amassing the customary dozen or more, he merely takes it as proof of her foreignness. It is left to the reader to see its relevance, to realise that it is not proof of her lack of means but evidence of her training in a society where the sheer quantity of outward display is not accounted proof of refinement. Orchids, the exotic hall-mark of the van der Ludyens, contrast ironically, in their voluptuous extravagance, with the frigid rectitude of those who take such a pride in growing them. Beaufort, the social swindler, cultivates gloxinias, May Welland carries a bouquet of sweet, white lily-of-the-valley, whilst Ellen receives tributes of golden roses and carnations. This 'language of flowers' is eloquent enough in highlighting the superficial differences between characters, as eloquent, indeed, as the elaborately documented details of their furniture, their dinner parties and their varying qualities of port

(1) The Decoration of Houses, written in 1897 in collaboration with the architect Ogden Colman, Jr. It was, according to Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), p.253, "an influential and pioneering work". It was, perhaps, written too early for us to accuse Mrs. Wharton of reinforcing, in fact as well as in fiction, the social attitudes she wished to decry.

which go to create a densely 'realistic' public world, without in any way suggesting that the same things may also underline facets of individual, private worlds. The trappings of civilised life are but one more piece of evidence of massed conformity.

It is only in The Reef (1912) that Mrs. Wharton totally abandons the panoramic sweep of society to explore in depths a relationship between two private worlds. The brief, sexual encounter between George Darrow and Sophy Viner takes place in social limbo, as does the subsequent meeting in the home of Darrow's prospective wife where Sophy is installed as a governess. The characters are freed from the pressures of a public world and act in accordance with their private concepts of right and wrong, their notions of the duty they owe to the others and their personal inclinations. This is not, of course, to suggest that the characters lack all connection with the public world. They, like Jamesian characters, are designed in such a way that their environments, past and present, are subject to the interpretations of private sensibilities. In so fundamentally altering the structure of her overall fictional reality, abandoning, for once, the public world which holds tyrannical sway over the passive psyches of its inhabitants, Mrs. Wharton draws closer to James and, ironically, succeeds better in portraying 'realistically' the experience of the individual.

As for the personal and private side of his life, it had come up to current standards, and if it had dropped, now and then, below a more ideal measure, even these declines had been brief, parenthetical, incidental. In recognised essentials he had always remained strictly within the limits of his scruples.³²

We can see in this, the degree to which Darrow is the master of his

own experience. His scruples, not those of society, are what ultimately count and the moments of 'straying' from the publically accepted path are, in the private perspective which is the only essential one, 'incidental'. The ascendancy of the private world is even more evident in Mrs. Leath. We first encounter her on the eve of Darrow's arrival, a moment when the hope of an altered future has a radical effect on her habitual perceptions of her environment, making her 'contemplate the scene with unwonted freshness':

... the house had for a time become to her the very symbol of narrowness and monotony. Then, with the passing of years, it had gradually acquired a less inimical character, had become ... the shell of a life slowly adjusting to its dwelling; the place one came back to, the place where one had one's duties, one's habits, one's books, the place one would naturally live in till one died: a dull house, an inconvenient house, of which one knew all the defects, the shabbinesses, the discomforts, but to which one was so used that one could hardly, after so long a time, think one's self away from it without suffering a certain loss of identity.³³

This is not the sort of list of 'things', the massed detail, which one is accustomed to find both in the works of the Naturalists and in others of Mrs. Wharton. In the latter, the connection between character and environment is implicit, as much a matter of the reader's interpretations as that of the author. Here, however, the 'things' are described in terms of the perceptions of the character, the connection is explicit and the whole a telling comment on the nature of the perceiving sensibility. Viewing the scene and attempting to see it through Darrow's eyes, Mrs. Leath feels as if 'a thin, impenetrable veil had suddenly been removed from it', revealing what had been merely 'illusiv e reality'. As the reader comes to see, however, this new perspective, too, is an illusion, a

romantic vision which cannot co-exist with the growing, and finally confirmed, suspicion that Darrow had slept with Sophy.

The vague world of promise, based on poetry and suppressed emotion, being shattered by her intuitive knowledge of the 'crime', gives way before a profounder view of the realities of life. Mrs. Leath comes alive emotionally, torn between her love and desire for Darrow and her jealous suspicions about his relationship with Sophy, suspicions which no amount of explicit detailing of the events can quell:

They meant, she supposed, that when she had explored the intricacies and darkneses of her own heart her judgment of others would be less absolute. Well, she knew now - knew weaknesses and strengths she had not dreamed of, and the deeper discord and still deeper complicities between what thought in her and what blindly wanted³⁴

The feeling uppermost in her mind, as she contemplates abandoning Darrow, is that she will never 'know' him as Sophy has done. The word goes through a series of meanings in the book, reflecting the various stages of self-awareness. Initially, Mrs. Leath feels she is about to 'know' in the sense that she will have an active part in the shaping of her own 'reality', that she is going to penetrate to the heart of experience. At this stage, her vision is vague and romantic and she sees knowledge as a desirable end. Subsequently, knowledge becomes inimical, consisting of a confirmation of her suspicions about Darrow and Sophy. This meaning then shades into sexual 'knowing' as she is forced to face her repressed sexual desires and, having faced them, to come to terms with a profoundly altered vision of 'reality'. She realises that she and Sophy meet on the common ground of physical desire. The conventional, moral aspects

which Darrow had believed would be paramount fade into insignificance before the unexpected reaction of Mrs. Leath's private world. She is herself alarmed and disorientated, unable to resolve her new self-knowledge with her former idea of herself, unable to react as that former self would have done yet uncertain as to how she should react.

Mrs. Wharton gives a superb picture of this private world in turmoil. The physical presence of Darrow, familiar furniture and firelight become salient features, seducing Mrs. Leath with suggestions of stability. Solitary moments bring the resurgence of old perceptions which, in their romantic bias, forbid the acceptance of the sullied Darrow:

The truth had come to light by the force of its irresistible pressure; and the perception gave her a startled sense of hidden powers, of chaos, of attractions and repulsions far beneath the ordered surfaces of intercourse. She looked back with melancholy derision on her old conception of life, as a kind of well-lit and well-policed suburb to dark places one need never know about. Here they were, these dark places, in her own bosom, and henceforth, she would always have to traverse them to reach the things she loved best.³⁵

Mrs. Wharton, too, has moved from the 'well-lit and well-policed' place. The sexual encounters between Darrow and the two women are recounted in a manner which owes nothing to the 'nice' conventions of any public world. They are included with impunity and with the measure of frankness appropriate to the perceiving sensibility. Mrs. Leath's acknowledgement of her own sexuality is not exploited as a comment on any public world; it is a personal revelation and there is no question of the apportionment of blame for previous imperceptiveness. The fact that she had married a man for whom life was "like a walk through a carefully classified museum, where, in moments of

doubt, one had only to look at the number and refer to one's catalogue³⁶ may suggest that she, like Maggie Verver, had striven to avoid confronting the 'facts'. If this is the case, then we must, once more, look on it as a private rather than socially enforced deception. The fictional reality of this novel is a coherent whole, structured around active private worlds in a fashion far more realistic than that of the fictional reality which attempts to overreach its aesthetic limits in order to assail an 'actual' public world. The Reef is, however, a singular example of Mrs. Wharton's prowess in portraying private worlds. The others of her novels discussed and such works as Hudson River Bracketed (1929) are more typical in having the dominating role allotted to the public world.

Sinclair Lewis also gave pride of place to the public world in fictions which are designed as satirical assaults on actuality. As however, he dealt with larger, less homogeneous groups than those of turn-of-the-century, upper-middle-class New Yorkers, his novels have a different emphasis. Lewis created figures whose particular settings did nothing to detract from their nationwide significance, making them 'typical' by endowing them with characteristics drawn from myriad individuals and justifying the consequent exaggeration by casting the whole in a satiric mould. Thus, in Babbitt (1922) we find a character who appeared on the periphery of such novels as Sister Carrie and Maggie whose real-life counterpart so distressed Henry James in the course of a train journey that he gave them very rough treatment in The American Scene. Babbitt, like Drouet and Pete, is a salesman, a member of the clan which James, with heavy sarcasm, referred to as 'my friends the drummers'. To the elderly and fastidious James, these fellow-travellers appeared 'extraordinarily base and vulgar'

and they caused him to wonder whether "the type with which the scene so abounded, ... the specimens I was thus to treasure, (were) all of the common class and the usual frequency?". Disturbed as much by their large appetites as by their loudness and gregariousness, James ultimately came to pity their 'lack of social connection', although it did occur to him to speculate, "How, when people were like that, did any one trust any one enough to begin, or understand any one enough to go on, or keep the peace with any one enough to survive?"³⁷ Had he but read Babbitt, then all such questions should have been answered. Babbitt's vision of the world and his behaviour are as much a part of the public world as the white-walled tyres he so admires.

In Elmer Gantry (1927), we find a religious exponent whose Christian and business ethics form a code closer, in its precepts, to the latter than the former and whose sole earnest of success is the gullibility of the great American public. Again, this figure is familiar, appearing briefly in The Bostonians (1886) in the shape of Dr. Selah Tarrant and in Dreiser's An American Tragedy (1925) as Asa Griffiths. In Main Street (1920) it is the community rather than any particular person which is typical and subject to satiric treatment. Like Lily Bart, Carol Kenicott, the heroine of Main Street, fails to satisfactorily fulfil her role as the representative of innocence and goodness whose martyrdom at the hands of an unfeeling society is the chief reason for indicting it. Armed with an innocence closely resembling crass ignorance and an idealism which is clichéd and inappropriate to the context, Carol does little to convince the reader that Gopher Prairie is wrong in rejecting her. Her flight from the pettiness of the town into the big city environment, and her consequent realisation

that 'institutions not individuals were the enemy', coupled with her belated apprehension that there is a redemptive quality in laughter are proof more of her initial naïveté than omens auguring well for the reconciliation she effects with Gopher. When one adds to this apology for a heroine a narrative which, although at times extremely witty, is obsessed with trivial detail and which seems to have a very ambivalent attitude to the community which it ostensibly wishes to condemn, then one wonders at the tremendous initial success of the book. (1)

Sheldon N. Grebstein³⁸ suggests that the publication of Main Street coincided with a readiness on the part of the American readers to finally abandon the long-discredited myth that the small town was the last outpost of moral worth, humane relationships and non-material values and to accept that fiction was a vehicle capable of more than mere romanticism.

Despite the appearance of the poems of Ezra Pound ...; despite the fiction of Jack London, Frank Norris, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, and others; despite the Muckrakers and the voice of H.L. Mencken rising in the land, most American readers continued to prefer writing which was traditional in its forms and which was affirmative, optimistic, and romantic in its tone. 39

Without recouring to pseudo-sociological arguments about the impact of the First World War on the Average American Reader, one can see

(1) Grebstein, Sinclair Lewis (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962) p.72, remarks that, "The public took Main Street with as much seriousness as the critics, according to contemporary sources" and quotes George E. O'Dell, writing in Standard, July 1922, as saying, "For everyone who has revolted against the book one has met a dozen who with a deep discomfort of soul accepted it ... and asked the Great American Question: What are we going to do about it?"

that where Lewis differs from both Dreiser and Norris is in his lack of obtrusive, theoretical standpoints. He is not concerned to illustrate theories about the basic nature of man, nor is he attempting to amalgamate the insights of science and the methods of literature to expose the effects of environment. Taking a figure, or a community, whose typicality is immediately apparent, he makes his point through the medium of satire, something noticeably absent from the works of the other two, creating a particular at once amusing and appalling and leaving the burden of generalising from it largely to the reader. Yet, unlike Mrs. Wharton, he was not taking a 'backward glance'. The characters and communities of which he wrote were living contemporaries to the original reader, not faint, lavender-embowered memories. Thus, it is possible to understand why Main Street made the impact it did on the grounds of the nature of the text itself. The universal significance which it was intended to have could not escape any reader of the Forward:

The town is, in our tale, called 'Gopher Prairie', Minnesota. But its Main Street is the continuation of Main Streets everywhere. The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kansas or Kentucky or Illinois, and not very differently would it be told Up New York State or in the Carolina hills.⁴⁰

This suggested breadth of application is carried through into the text itself. We first encounter Carol standing in an affectedly symbolic pose on a hilltop overlooking the Mississippi and are told, amid passages of nostalgia for the vanished frontier, that "a rebellious girl is the spirit of that bewildered empire called the American Middlewest".⁴¹ Even in these early passages Lewis's less-than-sure control over his prose is abundantly clear; Carol's symbolic gesturing and the memory of the frontier are evoked in

high-flown language which lies uneasily alongside such phrases as, "It is Carol Milford, fleeing for an hour from Blodgett College".⁴²

The character of Carol Kenicott, nee Milford, is equally lacking in coherent development. Her 'private' world is an agglomeration of romantic ideas and categorical assumptions about the public world, ill-founded prejudices about class and its outward manifestations and an obsession with the 'aesthetic' which is one with the third-hand romanticism she holds so dear. This unwieldy and unconvincing collection of views is propelled through the book by an ego of outrageous insensitivity and a narrator who seems convinced that his readers will find Carol disarming, eager, youthful, wise and, in fact, everything that Gopher Prairie is not. He makes no allowance for the reader finding the town's attitudes more attractive and acceptable than those of its would-be saviour, "She knew she could not take their point of view; it was a negative thing, an intellectual squalor, a swamp of prejudices and fears. She would have them take hers".⁴³ We cannot help but feel that, had Carol been brought up in Gopher Prairie, then she would have whole-heartedly endorsed its attitudes. Her private world is not marked by any breadth of understanding. It is merely derived from sources opposed to the small-town ethic. Failing in her first attempts at reform, she decides that she must either make the place more sophisticated in its values or turn it back to older, simpler codes. Theory cannot survive her sortie into the home of those she considers 'paragons' of simplicity. Although we are clearly meant to endorse her dislike of what she finds, we cannot fail to see that what is really getting in her way is her essential and ill-founded snobbishness. Subsequently, she does the reverse of Presley, abandoning action for sociological

theory and becoming the source of many glib generalisations with which, one feels, the narrator is in full agreement but which he would have been better advised to advance in his own voice:

But a village in a country which is taking pains to become altogether standardised and pure, which aspires to succeed Victorian England as the chief mediocrity of the world, is no longer merely provincial, no longer downy and restful in its leaf-shadowed ignorance. It is a force seeking to dominate the earth, to drain the hills and sea of color, to set Dante at boosting Gopher Prairie ...⁴⁴

As we watch Carol and her husband part over a question of patriotism, as we realise that Will Kenicott stands for some vague ideal of practical goodness and that Bea Sorensen's view of Gopher Prairie as a metropolis is as valid and reasonable, in terms of her limited experience, as Carol's, then we begin to appreciate how irrelevant the characters are to the success which the book enjoyed. The theme, the satiric and, in its time, audacious, attack on a deeply rooted American myth lent it a contemporary impact which neither the paste-board characters nor the erratic narrative warranted. Like the naturalistic novel, this work succeeded on the grounds of controversy along, placing too little emphasis on literary merit to give it any lasting worth in an altered public world. The promise which we discern in such fleeting glimpses as that of Eric Varlberg, the youth in whose escape from Gopher Carol had placed so much faith, playing a dummy piano in a canvas room, trapped, uselessly, in a world of celluloid fantasy, is never fulfilled in Main Street but comes to fruition in Babbitt.

Lewis is as ambivalent in his attitude towards Babbitt as he is towards Carol. Where the narrator at times divorces himself

sufficiently from her to mock some of her more grandiose ideals, in Babbitt he creates a character who is at once ludicrous, despicable, pathetic and appealing. In the latter novel, high-flown language is not proof of unsure narrative control but becomes one of the most powerful devices in the creation of the book's superb irony, highlighting, through its very inappropriateness, the comic quality of Babbitt's vision. Comedy, however, shades into tragedy, not because the public world makes a martyr of the central character but because the vision which he craves and which it supplies is so remote from all humane, meaningful experience. Even Babbitt feels this discrepancy, but he is so far the creature of the public world that he can only attempt to fill his need either by retreat into pure fantasy, a world which is itself born of the hackneyed images of escape purveyed by the public sphere, or by striving, in an unhappy, urban way, to recapture a more primitive, frontiersman-like style of life. The latter, too, owes its existence to a publically-perpetuated myth. That such puny deviations as the inoffensive Babbitt makes from the social norms bring down upon him the collective wrath and the threat of exclusion, is the crux of Lewis's argument against a society whose mainstay is vociferous self-congratulation and whose badge of membership is flamboyant conformity.

George F. Babbitt is a character of complex simplicity. His private world is distinguished from the public only by the enthusiasm, naïveté and exuberance with which he initially accepts all the latter has to offer by way of behavioural norms or material objects. In his eagerness and his lack of personal resources, he is the ideal disciple of a coercive social system, accepting all its dictates with a sincerity to which others may only pretend.

It was the best of nationally advertised and quantitatively produced alarm-clocks, with all the modern attachments, including cathedral chime, intermittent alarm, and a phosphorescent dial. Babbitt was proud of being awakened by such a rich device. Socially it was almost as creditable as buying expensive cord tyres.⁴⁵

This caricature consumer who substitutes statistical appreciations for more subjective, aesthetic ones is obviously the easy prey of every advertisement or other influence from his environment. Such private pride of ownership as he derives from his clock is nothing when compared with the joy which he takes from more overt possessions, such as his yard, "It delighted him, as always: it was the neat yard of a successful business man of Zenith, that is it was perfection, and made him also perfect".⁴⁶ Judging other people and himself solely by the number and quality of their material possessions and by the loudness of their conformist sentiments, Babbitt finds in the grandiose clichés in which his world abounds touching truths, full of meaning and evocative of emotional responses. His 'private' life seems to be irrelevant, entailing human relationships which, save in their social acceptability, have no bearing on Babbitt's public image. He regards his wife as an irritant, "for the first time in weeks, he was sufficiently roused by his wife to look at her",⁴⁷ and his children as scarcely more important, "for weeks together, Babbitt was no more conscious of his children than of the buttons on his coat".⁴⁸ This monstrous creation of a materialistic public world runs his life along profit and loss lines, reckoning that every action should entail some recognition, "Babbitt loved his son and would have sacrificed everything for him - if he could have been sure of proper credit".⁴⁹ With his 'genius of authentic love' for his 'neighbourhood, his city, his clan', with his view of the Second National Tower as "a temple-spire of the religion of business, a faith passionate, exalted, surpassing

common men"⁵⁰ and with his ability to go into 'an ecstasy of honest self-appreciation', Babbitt, like Mr. Leath, has only to turn to his catalogue to come up with an attitude or opinion, variously labelled 'Republican', 'Presbyterian', 'Elk' or 'Realtor'.

Lewis does not restrict his attack on the society which gave Babbitt life to an ironic look at the attitudes which, developed to their logical limits, would produce the Average Middle-aged American. Having explored these at length and with extended use of comically inflated language, he then allows Babbitt to attempt to escape his publically-orientated self. The faint stirrings of inarticulate dissatisfaction, which appear early in the form of a dream, Babbitt the Brave delighting a 'fairy girl' with his heroic deeds, grow until he starts to seek the embodiment of this girl in living women, no matter how unlikely the candidates may seem in appearance. Venturing into a moral jungle amid a crowd of jaded social misfits, he finds that he has neither the courage nor the desire to flaunt the precepts by which his social set judge a man and that between the futile dream reality and the sordid actuality there is a gulf he cannot bridge.

His rebellion is not, of course, his own; Paul Riesling, for whom he feels an admiration amounting almost to love, acts as a catalyst by suggesting the existence of a more critical, cynical view. Remarks such as, "this clean, sweet, respectable, moral life isn't all it's cracked up to be",⁵¹ coupled with the notion that one third of the members of the Athletic Club "hate the whole peppy, boosting, go-ahead game",⁵² disconcert Babbitt:

Now and then Babbitt suddenly agreed with Paul in an admission that contradicted all his defence of duty and Christian patience, and at each admission he had a curious reckless joy.⁵³

This heretical streak grows, until Babbitt finds that what he once so eagerly embraced has turned to sawdust in his arms; everything, religion, business, social intercourse and friendship, seems mechanical, "never daring to essay the test of quietness".⁵⁴ Babbitt, the chosen mouth-piece of Zenith-style optimism because he alone is truly convinced by its hackneyed phrases and sentimental utterances, the man who, through his naïve faith, can prop up the wavering convictions of the others, comes face to face with a yawning gulf between publicly expressed conviction and private doubt. Like Newland Archer, he faces a crisis of personal judgement against public sentence over the imprisonment of Paul:

Babbitt knew that in this place of death Paul was already dead. And as he pondered on the train home something in his own self seemed to have died; a loyal and vigorous faith in the goodness of the world, a fear of public disfavour, a pride in success.⁵⁵

The crucial point, the real tragedy, of Babbitt's situation is that, having accepted the public world for so long, he cannot exist without it. Fleeing from a world which 'once doubted, became absurd', he heads for the traditional place of freedom, the wilderness, only to return, "not because it was what he wanted to do but because it was all he could do".⁵⁶ Now aware of how essential the familiar surroundings of Zenith are to him, he sets out to preach his new, heretical beliefs, only to find that those who were so willing to listen when he propounded their public faith have a fearful distaste for his private 'eccentricities'. As he struggles against being

coerced into the Good Citizens League, a tool of 'social boycott', Babbitt finds that all he wants to do is to return to the fold, more sincerely appreciative of its encircling arm for having once strayed beyond its boundaries.

By structuring his fictional reality around a private world so expressive towards the public, Lewis makes an effective attack on the latter. Babbitt is not so much a puppet of society as an eager receptacle for its ideals. His enthusiastic admiration for the mass-produced and the new, neat, ironic reversal of the Jamesian use of aesthetically pleasing objects, whilst the deliberately inflated language used to describe the most trivial of things allows the reader to remain at a comic distance from the character. Lewis portrays Babbitt's search for an alternative set of values without either sentimentalising him or forcing him far beyond his abitudinal milieu. But, however humorous and fitting it may be to allow Babbitt to restrict himself to clichés, they are not the prerogative of the character alone. Lewis allows us no relief from the shrill, hackneyed monotone of the Boosters, scoring the narrative voice in identical key. In this he, like Mrs. Wharton, illustrates the dangers inherent in any large-scale, fictionalised attack on the public world. Replicating the language of that world in the interests of versimilitude but, at the same time, failing to introduce a distinct and separate narrative point of view, Lewis comes, inevitably, to be identified with much that he is intent on despoiling. The novel opens with the following passage:

The towers of Zenith aspired above the morning mist; austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as silver rods. They were neither citadels nor churches, but frankly and beautifully office-buildings. ... and on the farther hills were shining new houses, homes - they seemed - for laughter and tranquillity.

... The whistles rolled out in greeting a chorus as cheerful as the April dawn; the song of labor in a city built - it seemed - for giants.⁵⁷

Appearing before the introduction of Babbitt and fixed firmly in the narrative voice, this passage is, nevertheless, reminiscent in every intonation of many of Babbitt's eulogies about his physical environment. If the passage is intended to be ironical, and there is nothing to refute this assumption, then it is ill-chosen, for high-flown language only becomes ironic when it is contrasted with another view of the same subject or is perpetrated by Babbitt himself. One suspects, however, that Lewis might well intend this passage to be taken seriously, an early indication that one of the book's major themes will be the contrast between apparent potential and actual shoddiness; the clue to this interpretation lies in the two 'it seemed' parentheses, which suggest the disparity between a glorious environment and human folly is about to be explored. This interpretation is farther supported by the opening line of the next section, "There was nothing of the giant in the aspect of the man who was beginning to awaken ...".⁵⁸

Whatever the intention, and one suspects that even Lewis himself might have been in some doubt as to what it was, the lack of modulation in the language, the excessive use of cliché by both character and narrator and the use of repetition far beyond what is required to suggest the limited nature of the central character, all point to an uncertain grasp of the structure of the overall fictional reality. Lewis is a very didactic narrator, leaving the reader as little room for individual response as possible by underscoring each and every point several times. The multiplicity of sub-plots in the book are

designed to lay stress on some major event; as the Babbitts are spurned by the McKelveys, so the Overbrooks are spurned by the Babbitts; as Paul Riesling has an affair with a middle-aged woman, so Babbitt flirts with Tanis Judique; and so on, to the stage where the brashness and crudity of the public world which is being portrayed seems to infuse the portrayal itself.

In spite of the lack of literary polish, Babbitt is a successful creation. Like Martin Eden, he has a private world which responds to the conventional aspirations and lore of his public world and so he becomes its most effective representative, the medium through which the reader may see the folly and pretentiousness actively at work. Lewis achieves no mean feat in so fusing the public and private worlds. Babbitt is not a victim but the very symbol of a hysterically conformist and utterly materialistic age and, as such, he has no claim on our sympathies. Even his personal crisis does nothing more than reveal the depths of his inadequacy. Yet, this apotheosis of all that is despicable does appeal to us, if only because he is so limited and inadequate. One suspects that Lewis's attitude to Babbitt is a trifle ambivalent, that the character who endorses the public world's attitudes and the character who helplessly depends on that world cannot be condemned with equal force. It may be that Lewis in fact endorses Babbitt's fantasy, seemingly the only avenue of escape from an overwhelming public world.

In Elmer Gantry, written in 1927, five years after Babbitt, we see Lewis trying to create another symbolic prototype. Having exposed the small town and the provincial city, Lewis here turns his attention to a phenomenon common throughout America, the religious racketeer.

The time was ripe for such a book; it was a mere two years since the infamous Scopes trial in Dayton, a test-case for the newly passed law against the teaching of evolution in Tennessee which was more interesting for the variety of religious freaks and maniacs it attracted to the town than for its court-room proceedings. H.L. Mencken, amongst others, attended the trial in order to assert the rights of man as a free thinker, putting it, in his dispatches for The Mercury, into the wider context of the pernicious effect of religious parochialism.⁵⁹ He also wrote, with considerable amusement, about the Holy Roller meeting and the "aetheist who suffered in the town calaboose ... a travelling showman who had wandered in with his chimpanzee to make propaganda for Darwin".⁶⁰ The fantastic careers of such opportunists as Aimee Semple McPherson and Billy Sunday were also well-known examples of the role of popular religion in America at this time.

The meticulous research which Lewis undertook in writing both Babbitt and Elmer Gantry⁶¹ did not result in 'realism' akin to that of the Naturalists, save where the detailed rendering of surface reality, in the form of dialogue and physical descriptions, escapes, or rather, overwhelms, the ironic bent and leads to gratuitous elaborations. Gantry is as little given to introspection as Babbitt, a sad reflection on one who is, supposedly, the mentor of other peoples' conduct and a fount of traditional wisdom. In fact, it is only because the expectations of the public world are so predictable and so easily fulfilled that Gantry succeeds. Where Babbitt, save for a few business deals, cannot exploit the public world, Gantry is a past master in the art and his success is the condemnation of the system which permits it. He totally lacks the saving grace of naïveté, his moments of genuine enthusiasm being too transitory to count in

his favour, "he knew the rapture of salvation - yes, and of being the center of interest in the crowd".⁶²

The interest Gantry takes in sex is one of the chief arguments against him. His 'true' love, Sharon, reminds us to some extent of Aimee Semple McPherson, building temples and holding meetings in which the adulation she receives plays no small part, publically professing one religion but in private worshipping at a shrine dedicated to all female deities, of which she is the latest model. She dies, in the midst of exploiting the gullible public to feed her voracious ego, leaving Gantry free to go on from success to success. His panegyrics are faithfully reproduced, we see him laying the female members of his congregations, playing on their fears and indulging in the odd theoretical discourse, an indulgence which, for the reader, merely serves to show how superficial a grasp of theology both narrator and character have. The figure of the sincere but unsuccessful Shallard is repeatedly dragged before us, by way of contrast to the unscrupulous Elmer, and we begin to feel that the novel's search for verisimilitude is no excuse for its tedious, tendentious and unconvincing overall effect. In spite of some genuine wit and some striking uses of irony, Lewis makes Gantry too much of a puppet of his propagandist intention, stripping him of every vestige of believability without successfully expanding him to the dimensions of caricature.

As, at the end of the novel, Elmer seems set fair for moral domination of the world, Lewis rapidly coats him in a rosy hue, "Without planning it, Elmer knelt on the platform, holding out his hands and sobbing",⁶⁵ only to hastily re-introduce the darker tint, making Elmer's penulti-

mate vision that of a nubile young girl in his congregation. As the novel ends with a resounding "we shall yet make these United States a moral nation",⁶⁴ we again become aware of a certain ambivalence in Lewis's attitude. That this message, sound enough in itself, should come from the mouth of one who is a proven charlatan is, one assumes, intended to shock. In the light of all Elmer's double-dealing, his callousness towards the victims of his seductions, his exploitations of his friends and many other misdeeds, the vision of him poised on the brink of moral dictatorship of the United States is pregnant with possible meanings. Our difficulty, and, one feels, it is one we share with the author, is to decide precisely which meaning is meant to emerge with most force. Is it Elmer himself, the system which tolerates him or the public which so eagerly and uncritically accepts his platitudinous utterances which stands condemned?

Early in the book we are told, in tones reminiscent of the Naturalists, that Elmer as a youth was imprinted with the image of the Church:

The church and Sunday School at Elmer's village, Paris, Kansas, ... had nurtured in him a fear of religious machinery which he could never lose That small pasty-white church had been the center of all his emotions, aside from hell-raising, hunger, sleepiness, and love. And even these emotions were represented in the House of the Lord But the arts and the sentimentalities and the sentiments - they were for Elmer perpetually associated only with the church.⁶⁵

Given this early influence, his inability to understand those around him and his desire for popularity, Elmer seems to be absolved of all personal responsibility for the success which, in theory, he does not merit but for which, in practice, he seems admirably suited. He really does no more than seize the opportunities offered him.

Gantry as archetype is not of the same order as Babbitt, perhaps because the latter enjoys a more complex relationship with his public world. Gantry's private self is, in its shallowness, insincerity and selfishness, simply the reverse of his public image. At rare moments, as Elmer struggles to be 'good', the portrayal verges on something more profound, but Lewis is too intent on using the true nature of his character as a means to condemn the public world to paint him in anything other than the most lurid of hues.

This condemnation, however, stops short. Although the picture is somewhat confused, we realise that Lewis is not out to descry all institutions whose ostensible aim is the moral regulation of life. The church which fails to teach Elmer "any longing whatever for decency and kindness and reason"⁶⁶ and which is riddled with class distinctions does not emerge unscathed, in either its Baptist, its Methodist or its Episcopalian guise. Nor do the people who constitute its audience survive the exposure of their various, mainly carnal, sins to emerge as the repository of good and the earnest of a worthwhile future. Thus, Elmer's optimistic assumption at the end of the novel has many ironic reverberations when one recalls the personal, the public and the institutional insincerity laid bare in its wake.

But the irony rebounds in Lewis himself. Although perhaps more sincere, is his intention not, like that of the hell-fire preacher, to make 'these United States a moral nation'? Deploying a similar rhetoric, using a corresponding method of exaggeration, but promising no future rewards, Lewis in this novel again exemplifies the dangers inherent in any fictionalised attack on the public world. By

recreating it in minute detail, using its language and moral stances without fixing the narrative standpoint on another, distinct level or suggesting that there may be a positive alternative to what is being destroyed, he cannot avoid becoming in some way a part of the world which he is condemning and, after the initial, sensational impact of the exposure itself has dissipated, coming to seem ambivalent in his farthest-reaching intentions.

In spite of its more sociological bent and content, Lewis's novel Dodsworth (1929) bears comparison with Mrs. Wharton's The Reef as a work in which the customary orientation towards the public world gives way before an assertion of the private ability to re-structure events. Like Babbitt, Samuel Dodsworth is at that point in middle life when the aspirations of youth no longer provide sufficient impetus and the world view which they support becomes liable to change. Dodsworth is dragged from his habitual milieu by his vociferously patriotic wife and deposited in Europe. It is here that he comes to realise how far his life in America has been ordered by the whims of society, how little his relationship with his wife really means and how far Americans overlook the subtler, more aesthetic pleasures. He finally asserts his personal desires over his social habits and attempts to bring to his country, in the form of the Sans Souci development scheme, something of the private and artistic values he has learned in Europe. Although Lewis appears to assume that this plan, as well as its underlying motives, bear the stamp of Old World influence, there is something distinctly American in the form of Dodsworth's 'cultural transplantation' scheme, something strongly reminiscent of the ersatz houses around Hollywood so aptly described by West in The Day of the Locust. One might also suggest that to use a physical entity, in

the hope that it will reproduce not only the buildings but the states of mind of Europe, bespeaks the dependence of both author and character on the public world.

Dodsworth's private world manages to survive and even to grow in the heavy soil of Lewis's prose and, because he suffers personal crises and undergoes alterations in his private vision, he is in no way an archetype, but rather an anti-archetype.

To define what Samuel Dodsworth was, at fifty, it is easiest to state what he was not. He was none of the things which most Europeans and many Americans expect in a leader of American industry. He was not a Babbitt, not a rotarian, not an Elk, not a deacon. ... While he was bored by free verse and cubism, he thought rather well of Dreiser, Cabell, and so much of Proust as he had rather laboriously mastered.⁶⁷

Perhaps one might say that he is a realist's Christopher Newman, someone who has pitted a private resource against all the conformist influences of his public world and who, coming to Europe, finds time to allow that private resource develop. The same instinct which has protected Sam from the shallower excesses of American society comes to his aid in Europe, making him critical of the 'set' so beloved of his wife, "the bustle, the little snobberies, the cheap little titles, the cheap little patronage of 'art'"⁶⁸ strike him as a negation of 'the great life'. Because his vision is neither American nor mock European, he, like Newman, can encompass both ends of the social scale, liking 'low dives' filled with American journalists and genuinely admiring the artistic excellences of the Old World. This shows how far Lewis has moved from the publically orientated character. If Dodsworth could be said to represent any particular set of 'American' attitudes, then it is the sturdy independence of the

frontier, a tradition upon which he lays much stress in arguments. This is, however, a personal credo, not the articulation of a received point of view. Lewis counters Sam's singularity by making his wife the mouthpiece of liberal, democratic sentiments and, at the same time, a class-conscious gold-digger whose ability to deflate her 'sincere' husband is a sad reflection on the priorities in American society.

The structure of this novel is not radically different from that of other novels by Lewis. Because the public world and all its concerns is present to a far greater degree than in The Reef and because the growth of Sam's private perceptions is not the focal centre of the book, Lewis is able to continue the dominant narrative voice and the over-long passages of dialogue. Indeed, he seems to experience some difficulty in portraying Sam's consciousness, resorting either to terms of nightmare, 'fog' and 'menacing waters' or to colours:

Kaleidoscope. Scarlet triangles and azure squares, crystalline zigzags and sullen black lines. Meaningless beauty and distortions that were the essence of pain. Such were the travels of Samuel Dodsworth, those summer months.⁶⁹

The balance which is struck in this novel between public and private worlds, and the structure of the overall fictional reality, as incompatible. The growth of Sam's private world has to struggle for existence against the dominating voice of his wife and the many long, sociological discussions contrived around dinner tables. Whether Europe is better than America, whether travel is a good or a bad thing and whether Sam or Fran is to blame for the failure of their

marriage, all these issues can remain unresolved without negating the value of the book. This comes to rest in the resolution found by one man, by his satisfactory shaping of the public world in accordance with his own lights. That Sam, as the representative of the best in America, marries a woman who is the flower of European culture is less relevant than the fact that he, as an individual, should succeed in finding personal happiness.

In coming to this conclusion, one is in no way attempting to act as an apologist for Lewis. Such merit as the book has pales into insignificance when it is compared with James's treatment of a similar theme in The American. By restricting his novel to a single viewpoint and combining this with a subtle narration, James makes his implications far more telling and far better fused with the overall fictional reality than Lewis's overly explicit narration and his extensive use of dialogue. Both Mrs. Wharton and Sinclair Lewis have been criticised in this chapter on the grounds that they set out with the intention of desecrating the configurations of a real public world through the medium of satiric fiction, without either dissociating the narrative voice and outlook from that of the characters or suggesting that there may be a positive alternative to what they condemn. This is not to assume that what is missing from their novels is a paradigm of a better society, such as may be found in the works of the utopian novelists like Edward Bellamy. The criticism hinges upon the balance, or rather, the imbalance, which they create between public and private worlds. In making their characters merely the instruments of their satiric intention, they severely delimit the possibilities of response; in order to attack the public world, both authors portray it as an instrument of massed, conformist effect, never daring to allow their characters much in

the way of private worlds or individual initiative lest this should detract from the propagandist intention by showing that, even within the restricted world created by certain societies, the individual may survive and in some way impose his own perspective. This tendency is perhaps best exemplified by the manner in which physical environment is handled.

As was noted, no object is present in the works of Henry James save where its presence is justified by the fact that it has in some way impinged on the consciousness of a character. In other words, James allows the perceptions of his characters to create their own environment. This is not the case in the works of Lewis and Mrs. Wharton where the physical settings tend to become part of the narrative. Mrs. Leath is alone in re-structuring her familiar world by gazing at it through the eyes of one in an unaccustomed position; both Lily and Undine move through a world created, in minute detail, by the narrator. Character and setting tend not to interact in any meaningful way. It is assumed, for instance, that the splendours of Bellomont speak with the same voice to Lily, the other characters and to the reader. They are symbols of social status, selected by consensus and susceptible to no interpretation beyond the one imposed by society. Undine Spragg soon learns to 'crack' this code of things and surrounds herself with the symbols of the status to which she aspires. Even Newland Archer operates within the symbolic structure; in trying to analyse Ellen, he is aware of the objects with which she surrounds herself, although, at first, he cannot comprehend their meaning. His viewpoint is analagous to that of Mrs. Wharton in other works. Fully understanding the social hierarchy but aware that the trappings merely serve to cover individual

inadequacies, he is cynical about the appropriateness and validity of the overt structure. Because his private vision is not strong enough to withstand the public necessities or to put them in a more acceptable context, he retreats into a world of fantasy. Thus, we remain unfamiliar with his private world; the time scale in the book is elided so that we are presented with the 'fait accompli', the Newland for whom the idea of Ellen is more real than Ellen herself. This is a flaw in the structure of the overall fictional reality. Newland's vision, which plays so important a part in the novel, cannot be left to implication in the way that the vision of more socially bound characters can, nor is it satisfactorily portrayed by one brief mention of its retreat from the public world.

Sinclair Lewis, although dealing with a world far wider and less easily portrayed in terms of symbolic possessions, nevertheless uses a similar technique. Like Undine, Elmer is alive to the public interpretation of outward appearance and adroitly assumes the necessary garb. Carol Kenicott's inability to fit in to Gopher Prairie rests largely on her refusal to see her environment in the agreed way and she demonstrates this refusal by using an alien set of symbols, dressing differently and buying her furniture from outwith the town. Babbitt is a special case. Lewis makes his vision concur with that of the public world in such a way that private paucity and public folly both stand revealed. Lewis is fortunate that the physical settings he describes are so outlandish, so garish and yet so 'real' that the description itself becomes an instrument of satire even before one takes into account the disparity between the gorgeous promise of the environment and the shallowness of its occupants.

Given, as we are in the works of Mrs. Wharton and Sinclair Lewis, characters whose existence outwith their social and economic backgrounds is inconceivable yet who appear in novels designed to condemn those very backgrounds, one can begin to appreciate the negative effect of this balance between public and private worlds. Characters reduced to mere puppets of their environments lack the saving private vision so admirably shown in the works of Henry James, as well as those of Saul Bellow and John Barth. Herzog, for example, although in recoil from the complex degradation of his public world, nevertheless brings to the urban landscape through which he moves a vision which is far from negative, restructuring it in a manner as evocative of his private world as it is of the public. When the public world is given a dominating role, unopposed by either character or narrator, there is a loss of dramatic tension detrimental to the effect of the overall fictional reality. The lack of modulation in the language, the monotonous satire, the ambivalence discernible in the attitude of author to material and the comprehensive negation can all be seen as results of this. Massed detail, no matter how 'realistic' and meticulous, is not itself sufficient grist for the fictional mill, the end-product being social topography which, polished and witty though it may be, cannot survive comparison with works in which aesthetic considerations take precedence over the propagandist.

As we shall see in the following chapter, to attempt to describe a complete social microcosm through the medium of fiction and to give that description a latent nationwide significance is not an impossible task. F. Scott Fitzgerald did it successfully in The Great Gatsby. By trying to let the public world, portrayed in terms of its objects

and its mores, define their protagonists and by allowing these protagonists to passively accept such definition, Mrs. Wharton and Sinclair Lewis might be said to be striving towards an illusory sort of 'realism', the realism which fails to take into account the ability of the individual mind to impose its structure on the world.

APPENDIX

The large-scale and implicitly condemnatory portrayal of society was not the exclusive preserve of Sinclair Lewis and Edith Wharton. In his trilogies, U.S.A. (1937) and The District of Columbia (1952), John Dos Passos attempted a similar feat. Because he experimented with the form of the novel in an effort to make it commensurate with his purpose, these works merit brief mention. The introduction to U.S.A., the trilogy comprising The 42nd Parallel (1930), 1919 (1932) and The Big Money (1936), makes plain the author's desire to achieve a panoramic sweep of American society:

U.S.A. is the slice of a continent. U.S.A. is a group of holding companies, some aggregation of trade unions, a set of laws bound in calf, a radio network, a chain of moving picture theatres, a column of stock-quotations rubbed out and written by a Western Union boy on a black-board, a publiclibrary full of old newspapers and dogeared history books with protests scrawled in the margins in pencil. ... U.S.A. is a lot of men buried in their uniforms in Arlington Cemetery. U.S.A. is the letters at the end of the address when you are away from home. But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people.⁷⁰

Dos Passos's awareness that the nation comprises myriad trivial details of places and events leads him to attempt to incorporate the whole tone and texture of American life through the medium of such details. The fictional status of his work stems not only from the passages devoted to the lives of twelve central characters, nor from the semi-poetic 'Camera Eye' reflections of the scenes of their lives, but also from the inescapable authorial bias in favour of the working man. Just as Lewis tended to circumscribe his works to the middle-class, so Dos Passos shows a Londonian fondness for the labouring classes.

His structural innovations may be briefly described as the juxtaposition of written or spoken material from the actual, public world with the life stories of characters whose experiences are typically those of poor, immigrant workers, capitalists, etc. The social and economic status of such characters is given more importance than their private worlds and the extent to which their perceptions are shaped by the ideas informing the slogans, songs, stump speeches, headlines and newspaper stories is implied rather than stated, although the latter usually have some bearing on what is happening to the characters at any given point. For example, when Fainy McCleary's uncle acquires a printing press and prints 'Workers of the world unite', the following 'Newsreel' section consists of speeches about the inequalities of the system, the value of labour and a report on a failed trip by a balloonist. Although the implied connections are increasingly apparent, this use of written artefacts from the public world in an attempt to re-create that world in an abstract and impressionistic way is not a complete success. Too much is left to the inductive powers of the reader in the absence of an authoritative, structuring voice. Drummers, charlatan evangelists, prostitutes, capitalists, labourers, Irish immigrants, Jews, Negroes, Polaks and other ethnic minorities pass before our eyes in rapid succession and, although we may recognise many of the 'types' from our reading of Norris, Crane, Dreiser, London, James and Lewis, little is added to our understanding of them or of their situations. By selection and juxtaposition, Dos Passos strips the headlines, etc. of much of their original meaning and puts them into a context where they relate more closely to his overall fictional reality. But the structure of that reality fails as a whole. Dependent on disparate trivia, it contains neither a linear plot nor an authoritative, narrative voice to give

it coherence.

Thus, although neither Mrs. Wharton nor Lewis could be said to have succeeded in describing the public world through the medium of more orthodox fiction, Dos Passos's attempt to alter the form of the novel in order to make it into a more fitting vehicle for his propagandist intention does not enjoy any greater success. Once more, the search for realism, coupled with an ideological bias and a propagandist intention, founders because it ignores the shaping sensibility. One must look to the works of William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway to find the sort of realism which, by balancing public and private worlds in very different ways, creates an overall fictional reality commensurate with its implicit and explicit aims.

NOTES

1. Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel. From the Birth of the Nation to the Middle of the Twentieth Century, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston), p.263

Louis Auchincloss, Edith Wharton, A Woman in her Time (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), p.82

Richard Poirier, A World Elsewhere, The Place of Style in American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press), p.210
2. Richard M. Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition, Anchor Books (New York, 1957), p.157
3. Chase, op. cit., p.157
4. Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, 1st ed. 1905 (New York: Scribner's, 1941), p.7
5. The House, p.115
6. The House, p.13
7. The House, p.779
8. The House, p.104
9. The House, p.196
10. The House, p.82
11. The House, p.50
12. The House, p.116
13. The House, p.318
14. The House, p.116
15. The House, p.301
16. Louis Auchincloss, Pioneers and Caretakers, A Study of 9 American Woman Novelists, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p.38
17. Edith Wharton, The Custom of the Country, 1st ed. 1913 (New York: Scribner's 1941), p.193
18. Custom, p.401
19. Custom, p.591
20. Custom, p.267
21. Henry James, The American Scene, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1968), p.345

22. Custom, p.280
23. Custom, p.469
24. Custom, p.470
25. The House, p.146
26. Custom, p.231
27. Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 1st ed. D. Appleton & Co. (New York, 1920), this ed. The Modern Library (New York, 1920), this ed. The Modern Library (New York, 1948), p.11
28. Innocence, p.39
29. Innocence, p.192
30. Innocence, p.241
31. Innocence, p.209
32. Edith Wharton, The Reef, 1st ed. 1912 (New York: Scribner's 1965), p.129
33. The Reef, p.85
34. The Reef, p.318
35. The Reef, p.353
36. The Reef, p.95
37. Henry James, op. cit., pp.424-429
38. Sheldon N. Grebstein, Sinclair Lewis, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New York: Twayne's Publishers, 1962).
39. Grebstein, op. cit., p.37
40. Sinclair Lewis, Main Street, 1st pub. 1920, this ed. in Lewis at Zenith, A Three Novel Omnibus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p.3
41. Main Street, p.4
42. Main Street, p.3
43. Main Street, p.84
44. Main Street, p.200
45. Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt, 1st pub. 1922, this ed. in Lewis at Zenith (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p.340
46. Babbitt, p.341
47. Babbitt, p.342

48. Babbitt, p.477
49. Babbitt, p.475
50. Babbitt, p.346
51. Babbitt, p.376
52. Babbitt, p.378
53. Babbitt, p.379
54. Babbitt, p.483
55. Babbitt, p.511
56. Babbitt, p.523
57. Babbitt, p.339
58. Babbitt, p.339
59. See Carl Bode, Mencken, 2nd ed. (Carbondale & Edwardsville: South Illinois University Press, 1969), pp.264-269
60. H. L. Mencken, Heathen Days, 1890-1936, 8th ed. (Knopf: New York, 1968), pp.225-226
61. Grebstein, op.cit., p.100
62. Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry, 1st ed. Harcourt, Brace & World (New York, 1927), this ed. Signet Book (New York, 1967), p.52
63. Gantry, p.416
64. Gantry, p.416
65. Gantry, p.31
66. Gantry, p.34
67. Sinclair Lewis, Dodsworth, 1st ed. Harcourt, Brace & World (New York, 1929), this ed. Signet Book (New York, 1967), p.18
68. Dodsworth, p.134
69. Dodsworth, p.296
70. John Dos. Passos, U.S.A., 1st pub. 1937, this ed., 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1960), p.vi.

CHAPTER FOUR

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1926) succeeds in portraying a social microcosm complete with hierarchies and status symbols and in suggesting that this microcosm is in some way flawed without resorting either to satire or propaganda. Throughout the novel, there is a tension between the interpretation which the public world puts on the actions and the background of Gatsby and the interpretation which the reader gradually arrives at, through the medium of a narrator who is capable of looking at the world around him in a critical and individual fashion.

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory, enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.¹

The above passage marks the narrator, Nick Carraway's final analysis of the mystery of Gatsby, an analysis couched, appropriately, in terms at once romantic and reminiscent of the mythological element in the American dream. As the 'inessential' houses fade away, so we can see that Carraway has at last come to dissociate Gatsby from the vast accretion of material objects with which he surrounded himself and which produced, in the narrator, a reaction distorted by prejudice against the rich. Gatsby finally stands revealed, to reader and narrator, as a man whose belief in 'the orgiastic future' was a symptom of his naïveté. Self-created materially, he was 'true to

a conception of himself' born of the fertile but ill-informed imagination of a seventeen-year old, a conception full of romance and promise and free from the slick, meaningless sophistications of the East Egg set. What Carraway comes to realise is that Gatsby did not relate to his material possessions in the same way as the rest. For him they were not ends in themselves but means to the romantic and sole end of his existence, the possession of Daisy Buchanan.

Having first seen Daisy as the epitome of all that he craved materially, Gatsby had come to elevate her out of her context to a level where she had become the ideal of his life. Owner of all the material appurtenances which had once shaped her image for him, he uses his desire for her as his *raison d'etre*, acquiring only in order to be commensurate with what he considers her standards, throwing huge parties in hopes that she might appear at one of them, and, finally, with all the acute self-consciousness of a seventeen-year old, arranging a meeting with her through the narrator. When she is at last in his house, he reveals the pathetic depths of his dream by piling shirt upon shirt before her, tributes to his ideal the potency and poignancy of which manage to communicate with even the far from ideal Daisy. Gatsby fails to see that his appeal to her resides in the vast, incredible efforts he has made to get her and to please her. Basically destructive and self-centred, she gives way only briefly to the mute argument of Gatsby's 'things'. She herself is too wealthy to be impressed by them as symbols of wealth, too shallow and ephemeral to appreciate that in accepting them she also accepts their underlying intention, that she should become a part of Gatsby's dream. The fleeting, sexual satisfaction which she offers is no fitting recompense for a lifetime devoted to constructing a material

world capable of containing that dream.

The Great Gatsby is no less an attempt to encompass a large-scale vision of a society than The House of Mirth or Babbitt, and, indeed, in East and West Egg respectively we can discern the seeds of Mrs. Wharton's long-established New York society and Lewis's aspiring middle-class. Fitzgerald's approach, however, differs radically from that of the other two. Where they rely on a didactic and satiric narrative voice to give coherence to the structure of the overall fictional reality, he introduces the figure of a narrator whose private perceptions are sufficiently detached from the central action to be of value to the reader, yet who is involved in the public world to an extent that makes it necessary to treat his observations with circumspection. Although sharing Fitzgerald's contempt for those who abuse their wealth and its consequent privileges, Nick Carraway is not merely the author's stand-in. He is a fully developed character whose possessions, house and background are as eloquent of his private world as those of the other characters. They fit neatly into that meticulously constructed pattern of symbols which is but one example of the aesthetic care at work in the book. Carraway comes from the middle West, from a family whose stable position in that society is evinced by the fact that their house is always referred to as 'the Carraway house', but, through his experiences at Yale, he has earned the right to regard himself as a part of the Eastern public world.

At first, he regards Gatsby as 'the proprietor of the elaborate road-house next door', an attitude in tune with his adopted public world. His house, significantly a rented one, stands beyond that of Gatsby,

world capable of containing that dream.

The Great Gatsby is no less an attempt to encompass a large-scale vision of a society than The House of Mirth or Babbitt and, indeed, in East and West Egg respectively we can discern the seeds of Mrs. Wharton's long-established New York society and Lewis's aspiring middle-class. Fitzgerald's approach, however, differs radically from that of the other two. Where they rely on a didactic and satiric narrative voice to give coherence to the structure of the overall fictional reality, he introduces the figure of a narrator whose private perceptions are sufficiently detached from the central action to be of value to the reader, yet who is involved in the public world to an extent that makes it necessary to treat his observations with circumspection. Although sharing Fitzgerald's contempt for those who abuse their wealth and its consequent privileges, Nick Carraway is not merely the author's stand-in. He is a fully developed character whose possessions, house and background are as eloquent of his private world as those of the other characters. They fit neatly into that meticulously constructed pattern of symbols which is but one example of the aesthetic care at work in the book. Carraway comes from the middle West, from a family whose stable position in that society is evinced by the fact that their house is always referred to as 'the Carraway house', but, through his experiences at Yale, he has earned the right to regard himself as a part of the Eastern public world.

At first, he regards Gatsby as 'the proprietor of the elaborate road-house next door'; an attitude in tune with his adopted public world. His house, significantly a rented one, stands beyond that of Gatsby,

one step nearer to that of the Buchanans, those 'two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all' yet whose outlook he endorses. It is at their house that he first hears, in a suspensful and semi-legendary way, which reflects the attitude of a society intent on finding and creating drama, about his nearest neighbour, Gatsby. Only gradually does he become critical of the Buchanans; his early impression of Tom, reminiscent, in its emphasis on power-packed muscles straining at their covering garments, of the comic-book hero, is replaced by the recognition that the mock-colonial mansion is an empty symbol, with no bearing whatsoever on the simple, moral codes so much a part of the original, Western way of life. Tom Buchanan's interest in ideas is no more than a socially acceptable substitute for real thought:

They were careless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together and let other people clean up the mess they had made ...²

By this stage, however, Carraway's vision has expanded and he no longer looks on the world as being made up only of 'the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired'. Tom, like Babbitt, seems absolved from all direct responsibility, 'like a child' because he has not the personal resources to counter the dictates of the public world.

Towards Daisy, Carraway is less forgiving, partly as the result of his feeling for Gatsby's dream, but mostly because, from the outset, he saw that she had substituted the appearance of feeling for feeling itself:

The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.³

Daisy's marked preference for white is, in the light of this, a perversion of its traditional associations, a sign not of virginal purity but of covert, self-enrapt corruption. Gatsby, so adroit in deploying the symbolic language of the public world to his own ends is, nevertheless, guilty of too literal and too naïve a translation. As he adopts the symbols of success with a lavishness verging on the incredible, and so all but defeats his desire to impress the public world in a certain way, so he assumes that Daisy's outward show is an accurate reflection of her state of mind.

The disparity between appearance and reality is exploited in a far more varied and subtle way by Fitzgerald than by Lewis. The society which is being portrayed is, in every aspect, more fantastic than real, a public dream created and supported by money, defying the logic of existence which lies in the pursuit of success or the struggle after any ideal by being an end in itself. Gatsby's parties at which no-one knows the host, save in his semi-legendary capacity, at which waves of people sweep on the wings of alcoholic fantasy across a lawn rendered unreal by the 'blue' moonlight, at which individuals have but the faintest notion of each other's identity, to which people come uninvited and depart unrecognised, having explored the private recesses of their unknown host's house and having added one more fantastic lie to the lore which surrounds

him, these parties are the epitome of this dream world for all the participants save Gatsby himself. The latter is unique in this world, 'material without being real', for he merely feeds the public fantasy in pursuit of a private one. His fantasy has reality as its ultimate aim and so is, as Carraway comes to appreciate, redolent of older, simpler human longings, more worthwhile, in spite of its achievement by similar means, than the volitionless public dream.

If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life
 ... it was an extraordinary gift of hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person No - Gatsby turned out all right in the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.⁴

The transitory, irrational public world enables Gatsby to 'create' himself, according to his 'platonic conception' and, indeed, the mythic, Horatio Alger quality is part of his success. His elaborate mode of speech, traceable with most of the other facets of his character to literary or Hollywood sources, abates only when he wishes to express his deepest feelings. His relationship with Daisy, he says, was 'just personal' and her voice is 'full of money'. Both phrases point to a private world beyond the comprehension of even Carraway, one which remains vague in spite of all the narrator's interpretative efforts. "Gatsby believed in the orgiastic future"⁵ is a suitably inscrutable summation, suggesting a mixture of sexual desire, excess and romanticism.

The complex organisation of the book's chronology heightens the dream-like effect of the whole and, at the same time, presents

considerable analytic problems. Carraway gives us his early and his mature vision of events simultaneously, at times letting the latter so confuse the time-scale that he has to make corrections. It is by balancing these two visions that the reader approximates the truth of events, appreciating as he does so Fitzgerald's skill in portraying an account full of subjective judgements and emotional involvements as well as rationalisations imposed in hindsight. Carraway has, in a way, made Gatsby into a myth of his own, feeling that he is particularly qualified to recount the story because, at the time of Gatsby's death 'no one else was interested' with "that intense personal interest to which everyone has some vague right at the end".⁶ His susceptibility to the visual stimuli of his physical environment, tinged as it is with an ironic awareness, makes him an ideal medium for social criticism.

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and beauty in the world.⁷

This cityscape, unlike the one at the outset of Babbitt, brings with it no danger of confused points of view. Carraway has the yearning of the parochial mind towards the city, seeing it full of promise and adventure, yet finding that, in actuality, he may only observe, not participate, "At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others ... wasting the most poignant moments of night and life".⁸ When he does enter the city in company with either Gatsby or Tom, caught up in their pursuit of pleasure or money, he becomes aware that it is an uncomfortable,

corrupt place and that its outward promise is but one more facet of the discrepancy between appearance and reality. The tight structuring of the novel is such that the whiteness, mentioned in the quote above and elsewhere in association with the city, is implicitly linked with the whiteness surrounding Daisy. In both cases it is a cover for corruption. In the above, the city is seen from the depths of Gatsby's car and, as Carraway remarks, "with fenders spread like wings we scattered light through half Astoria ...",⁹ we again note his tendency to view Gatsby through the distorting lenses of myth.

Vision and myth are inextricably interwoven throughout the book. The eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg, starting out across a wasteland of ashes from the remains of an outdated advertisement, are susceptible to many interpretations. When the distraught Wilson envisages them as the eyes of God, he makes an unwitting but vital connection between the material and the spiritual. The old myths of East and West are given some credence by the narrator and it is no accident that the traditional home of moral worth, the West, is connected to the symbol of corruption, the city, by a wasteland dominated by the ancient emblem of deity in the form of a tattered and irrelevant advertisement. After Gatsby's death, Carraway finds that "the East was haunted for me ... beyond my eyes power of correction"¹⁰ and the owl-eyed man in Gatsby's library, impressed that his books are genuine, remarks, "What realism",¹¹ neatly underlining the importance of appearance and the limited expectations of a public world in which the approximation to reality need not be carried very far. Carraway, in noting the grotesque and meaningful juxtapositions of physical objects, prefigures the narrators of Barth and Bellow, who register the malaise in their societies by observing irregular or irrational combinations of 'things'.

The Negroes and the funeral procession remarked by Carraway as signs that 'anything can happen' once they have crossed into the city are of the same order as the copulating dogs seen outside the undertaking establishment by the narrator of The Floating Opera. The private world alive to such incongruous juxtapositions and the public world which produces them combine to comment on the nature of 'reality'. Saul Bellow uses just this sort of public/private world conjunction as the basic element in structuring the overall fictional reality of Mr. Sammler's Planet. In the context of The Great Gatsby, the conjunction serves to underline that the fantastic and the improbable are not the prerogative of East and West Egg but also dwell in the city.

Carraway's vision and experience lead him to give credence to the idea that the East is corrupt and the West sanctified, although he is aware that, in the case of East and West Egg, the notion is discredited and the differences between the two more apparent than real. Both are based on mindless materialism. Dining at Daisy's, he tries to draw her back from the brittle sophistication she affects and to remind her of her cultural heritage by saying, "Can't you talk about crops or something?".¹² The remark is seized by Tom as the excuse for a discourse on the disintegration of civilisation. Daisy is appalled by West Egg only because it is less polished than the East and the mindless social aspirations are more apparent, "its raw vigour that chafed under the old euphemisms and ... the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing". Ultimately, Carraway refuses to generalise these observations and explains the story away in terms of Western innocence being unable to cope with Eastern corruption:

That's my Middle West - I am a part of that, a little solemn with the feeling of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name. I see now that this has been the story of the West, after all - Tom, Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.¹⁴

One cannot help feeling that Carraway is, like Gatsby, placing total reliance on an ideal, seeking justification in a romantic illusion. As Gatsby's illegal practices and his immoral background are excused on the grounds that they occurred in the pursuit of a private ideal which, in its individuality, deserves a place with the earliest dreams of men in America, so the conduct of the others is excused through a more public myth. Whether Fitzgerald endorses Carraway's mythic bent or not remains obscure. Eastern society has been debunked, in its mindless materialism and its heartless perpetration of public fantasy. The personal ideal has proved incapable of survival and, unless Fitzgerald agrees with his narrator that the West is the sole surviving hope, then we have a picture as negative as any found in Lewis or Mrs. Wharton. In this case, however, ambivalence in ultimate intention is less crucial, for Fitzgerald has, in the manner of James, explored a social microcosm through the eyes of one character and has not set out to drive his readers to any single conclusion. The society which swirls about Gatsby is far from admirable but, such is the balance which is struck in this superbly structured novel between public and private worlds, that the reader can understand and appreciate without feeling it necessary to probe the attitude of the unobtrusive author. The Great Gatsby stands as proof that it is possible to faithfully recreate a social microcosm within a fictional context, without either giving the public world a dominating position or compromising more artistic considerations.

That's my Middle West - I am a part of that, a little solemn with the feeling of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name. I see now that this has been the story of the West, after all - Tom, Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.¹⁴

One cannot help feeling that Carraway is, like Gatsby, placing total reliance on an ideal, seeking justification in a romantic illusion. As Gatsby's illegal practices and his immoral background are excused on the grounds that they occurred in the pursuit of a private ideal which, in its individuality, deserves a place with the earliest dreams of men in America, so the conduct of the others is excused through a more public myth. Whether Fitzgerald endorses Carraway's mythic bent or not remains obscure. Eastern society has been debunked, in its mindless materialism and its heartless perpetration of public fantasy. The personal ideal has proved incapable of survival and, unless Fitzgerald agrees with his narrator that the West is the sole surviving hope, then we have a picture as negative as any found in Lewis or Mrs. Wharton. In this case, however, ambivalence in ultimate intention is less crucial, for Fitzgerald has, in the manner of James, explored a social microcosm through the eyes of one character and has not set out to drive his readers to any single conclusion. The society which swirls about Gatsby is far from admirable but, such is the balance which is struck in this superbly structured novel between public and private worlds, that the reader can understand and appreciate without feeling it necessary to probe the attitude of the unobtrusive author. The Great Gatsby stands as proof that it is possible to faithfully recreate a social microcosm within a fictional context, without either giving the public world a dominating position or compromising more artistic considerations.

NOTES

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, 1st pub. 1926, this ed. The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald, Vol.I, 4th ed. (London, 1966), p.162-3
2. Gatsby, p.161
3. Gatsby, p.33
4. Gatsby, p.20
5. Gatsby, p.163
6. Gatsby, p.149
7. Gatsby, p.72
8. Gatsby, p.64
9. Gatsby, p.72
10. Gatsby, p.139
11. Gatsby, p.54
12. Gatsby, p.29
13. Gatsby, p.104
14. Gatsby, p.159

CHAPTER FIVE

Nathanael West, F Scott Fitzgerald, Budd Schulberg, Norman Mailer and
Gore Vidal

In the novels so far discussed, the role of the public world has, like that of the private world, varied according to the preoccupations of the author. Even the Naturalists, who actively strove to replicate a real 'public' world within the context of their fictions, could not avoid selective and descriptive procedures which marked the worlds they portrayed with the indelible stamp of individual predilection and ultimate intention. Mrs Wharton's desire to indict the society of which she wrote led her to stress its limiting, dictatorial aspects and to create a world so rarified and exclusive that it resisted her attempt to relate it to other, more mundane public worlds. The attempt merely resulted in serious damage being done to the structure of the overall fictional reality. Sinclair Lewis, as we have seen, moulded the institutions of the extant world into shapes complimentary to his broad, satiric purpose, whilst Henry James rendered objective social reality irrelevant by exalting the subjective vision. Thus, it has so far been assumed that the public world of any novel is as much the creation of its author as any other aspect, the degree to which it is modelled upon existing social microcosms being subject to the finished shape of the overall fictional reality and to the discretion of the author.

It may, therefore, seem scarcely defensible to discuss a group of novels linked neither by their common authorship, nor by similarities in the approaches of their writers to the structuring of the overall fictional reality, but merely by a coincidence of setting. This setting is, however, quite unique. Where other public worlds tend, in a limited and amateurish fashion, to mythologise themselves and their inhabitants, Hollywood does it with professional dedication

and zeal and on an unequalled scale. Because its major industry is in part the perpetuation of the myths underlying American life, playing seemingly endless variations on the theme of the frontier in Westerns, or encapsulating the moral worth of the small town in reel after reel of celluloid, or continuing to suggest that the Horatio Alger story has still some chance of coming true, it is, inevitably, itself a species of myth-maker. But the Hollywood myth does not emerge from any actual experience transformed by history and verbal tradition into a socially salient tale. It is the by-product of the creative vulgarity of the film industry, based on the re-enactment or the imitation of 'real' experience. In a sense, Hollywood is a public world already replete in fiction. Fiction lies at the root of its major industry and that industry is, in turn, surrounded by fictions; the studios commemorate the Horatio Alger myth in celluloid and are, potentially, places where Algeresque success is possible. Hollywood is tripartite; it is a district of Los Angeles, it is the studios, with the sets representing in one-dimension many important locations in the history of man and the actors striving to reproduce the emotions attendant upon long-dead events, and it is the place of pilgrimage for those aspiring to fame and those who wish to be near the myth-makers. This chapter is devoted to analysing how authors as widely divergent in their approaches to the structuring of fictional reality as Nathanael West, F Scott Fitzgerald, Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer deal with this public world. Does the fact that the public world is already fictionalised influence them in any way, making their Hollywood novels bear a greater resemblance to each other than one might reasonably expect from one's reading of their other works? What aspects of the public world are given particular salience in each novel? How do these authors

deal with the mythologising bent of the public world, do they explode or perpetuate the myths?

One may say at the outset that there are certain striking similarities between the novels. Types of character tend to recur, the descriptions of the background all emphasise the lack of 'native' architecture and the the agglomeration of styles of building, the roles of actor and audience are explored, as are the distinctions between appearance and reality, the central private worlds have much in common and the structuring of the overall fictional reality is, in every case, complex by comparison with the simplified structures underlying cinematic works of art. Whilst the first four similarities may be simply explained by the coincidence of setting, the last two suggest that the setting itself imposes certain demands upon the author who wishes to encompass it within his fictional reality. Just as Hollywood, in translating some American myth into celluloid, alters the nature of that myth, so the author, in translating the Hollywood myth into his species of fiction, may alter the nature of that fiction. Do novels as widely separated in time as The Day of the Locust (1939), What Makes Sammy Run? (1941), Myra Breckinridge (1968), Marilyn (1974) and Myron (1975), together with the unfinished The Last Tycoon (1940), bear an inordinate resemblance to each other? It will be proposed, in the course of this chapter, that the tripartite world of Hollywood does delimit the choices open to the author who writes about it. The complexities and subtleties which lie beneath its apparently simple façade are themselves increasingly commonplace. The ironies which these authors discern in Hollywood somehow fade into insignificance when one finds that, in 1975, Hollywood has the gall (or is it the ingenuousness?) to make The Day of the Locust, that sophisticated and devastating condemnation

of all that it stands for, into a film. Even, it seems, in its death-throes, this actual public world is capable of withstanding novelistic assault. Indeed, it turns the very assault into yet another means of re-affirming its own mythic status.

This does not imply, however, that The Day of the Locust (1939) has lost any of its original force. The earliest of the books discussed here, it is also the most profound in its analysis of the curious nature of the public world. Like the other central characters, Tod Hackett exists on the edge of the Hollywood stage, viewing it through eyes accustomed to visual art in the form of paintings and therefore well-suited to underline its failings in this direction. This sensitivity is coupled with a certain stoical streak, an ability to record without comment the curious juxtapositions of objects in the public world:

He pushed his way through a tangle of briars, old flats, and iron junk, skirting the skeleton of a Zeppelin, a bamboo stockade, an adobe fort, the wooden horse of Troy, a flight of baroque palace stairs that started in a bed of weeds and ended against the branches of an oak, part of the Fourteenth Street elevated station, a Dutch windmill, the bones of a dinosaur, the upper half of the Merrimac, a corner of a Mayan temple, until he finally reached the road.¹

That Tod, in the course of this 'picaresque' adventure, appears to look on these objects as no more than obstructive relics does not prevent the reader from appreciating the irony inherent in such an agglomeration of literary, historical and anthropological motifs. Such things are not only lumped together in the junkyards of backlots but within the functioning part of the studio itself, their proximity bespeaking a certain inability or unwillingness to discriminate between

or to fully comprehend the original significance of, the objects being replicated. As Monroe Stahr says, "Our condition is that we have to take people's own favourite folk-lore and dress it up and give it back to them. Anything beyond that is sugar".² Hackett's journey through the discarded sets implies that Hollywood has translated all these places, and no doubt the events which took place in them, into one-dimensional artefacts, which once treated in this way are then discarded.

Whilst the sets are significant in terms of Hollywood's relationship to the myth and moments of history, they are also significant in themselves. As artefacts, they exercise an influence on the characters. Cecilia Brady looks on them as "the torn picture books of childhood, like fragments of stories dancing in an open fire. ...and at night of course in an enchanted and distorted way, it all comes true".³ In What Makes Sammy Run?, two characters walk past a New York street, through a Latin Quarter in Paris to arrive at a South Sea island, "We both lay back and laughed in the sun, not so much at what we were saying but at the idea of being on a desert island together".⁴ It takes Myra Breckenridge to ignore the effect which the sets were intended to produce. The old sets for her are not eloquent of anything other than the films in which they were used, for it is her role to make a myth of myth-making. Such apparatus of myth as the Café de Paris is significant for her only because it had once acted as a backdrop to some star or other. The pretence takes precedence over the original actuality.

If the sets contradict the logic of time and place, then this is quite reasonable. Their function is, after all, to lend credence to fantasy.

But when, inevitably, the fantasising within the studio walls spreads to the surrounding area, then the implications of the physical settings become more sinister. Where, in other works and other settings, the physical environment is a constant factor, its cultural, historical and personal roots giving it a stability which can survive the varied, subjective responses of the characters (and which, indeed, may serve to focus and re-direct these responses), the physical environment of Hollywood, the Los Angeles suburb, is distinctly unstable, largely a pretence of 'plaster and lath'. Babbitt's satisfaction in the appearance of his backyard derived from the fact that it conformed to the standards set by Zenith society and therefore confirmed his place in that society. No such comprehensible and coherent pattern underlies the physical world of Hollywood. In all the books, the cavalier fashion in which modes and styles of architecture are seized upon and mixed is emphasised, although it is to West that one must turn for the most profound comment on the phenomenon:

But not even the soft wash of dusk could help the houses. Only dynamite would be of any use against Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temples, Swiss chalets, Tudor cottages, and every possible combination of these styles that lined the slopes of the canyon.

When he noticed they were all of plaster, lathe and paper, he was charitable and blamed their shape on the materials used. Steel, stone, and brick curb a builder's fancy a little, ...but plaster and paper know no law, not even that of gravity.⁵

Noting that the imitative drive has not stopped short at the dwelling places of other cultures but has extended even to their places of worship, in a manner so typically lacking discrimination, the reader finds that Tod, as usual, is moved to respond with profound aestheticism, "It is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how

tasteless, even horrible, the results of that need are. But it is easy to sigh. Few things are sadder than the truly monstrous".⁶

Others are less objective and academic. Those who have to live in such places, who come to California in search of some new life or even identity, are profoundly affected by the singular lack of definable, cultural ties in their three-dimensional 'sets'. The timid, ill-socialised Homer, living in the mock Irish-cum-Spanish house with its two identical rooms, its mixture of paper, plastic and real plants, its tenuous hold on the farthest edge of the canyon and its excessive proximity to the slope behind, is a pathetic figure. Caught in this nightmare of a developer's whimsy, relying on a lizard for company, unable to express emotion save through the jerky convolutions of his hands and too afraid to seek release in the shape of sleep, he is physically typical of those who West sees as having come to California to die and mentally typical of those who bring their stunted private worlds to Hollywood in search of some alter ego. Thus, his house is a stage whose props give no clue as to the appropriate role. Homer does not know whether he is Hamlet or Falstaff.

Sammy Glick lives in an equally mixed mansion. But, in this case, it is in a way appropriate, reflecting his chequered career and being the variegated symbol of his ultimate success:

The house itself was of baronial proportions, an interesting example of the conglomerate style that was just beginning to disappear in Hollywood, a kind of Persian-Spanish-Baroque-Norman, with some of the architect's own ideas thrown in to give it variety.⁷

Of course, stylistically alien architecture is not the prerogative of Hollywood; Tom Buchan's house, in The Great Gatsby, is mock-homestead and Dodsworth's Sans Souci development is intended to be European in design. But in both these cases, there is a certain, albeit obtuse, relationship between the chosen style and the private world of the character. Only in Hollywood does one find such extreme and illogical mixtures of modes, which bear no conceivable relation to the inhabitants but which, once more, show how the 'factory of fantasy' is none too scrupulous nor too cerebral in its appropriation of artefacts which were once meaningful. Hence, the author writing of Hollywood cannot use the physical environment to complement the mood or highlight facets of the private world contained by it, for that environment owes more to the script-writers of the studios than to the cultural identities of the inhabitants. Only Myra is quite at home in her pseudo-Chateau Marmont, for to her the admixture of inappropriate styles is the native, culturally meaningful one. For those who seek to find a more mundane 'reality', it is not.

To accommodate this singularly intractable public world within the context of their fictions, novelists resort to a variety of techniques, all dependent upon private worlds which are qualified by their eccentricity to comment on the whole, or at least to put it into a different perspective from that which the actual public world purveys. Thus, Myra Breckinridge, and, one might suggest, Norman Mailer, ride roughshod over reality, borne aloft on the wings of fantasies more outrageous and extreme than any ever dreamt of in the annals of Hollywood, seizing upon myth, magic and sheer weight of words in what is an open attack on the reader and his traditional views. Although lacking their ego-centric force, Tod Hackett has a vision whose sensitivity to the 'intrinsic worth' of objects, coupled with his

stoicism, makes him an apt commentator on a scene which he places in the category of visual experience. From the unfinished The Last Tycoon one has the impression that Cecilia Brady was intended to fulfil a role akin to that of Nick Carraway in The Great Gatsby; she is involved but not submerged in the life of the studios and her prejudices are made known to us so that we may allow for them when attempting to assess her worth as a commentator. The satiric intention of What Makes Sammy Run? is clear in the Horatio Alger proportions of Sammy Glick. However, Al Manheim's love/hate relationship with both Sammy and Hollywood do not qualify him as a valuable sensibility. As Mailer and Vidal show, in order to make an impression on this resilient topic, it is necessary to push the bounds of credibility far beyond their reasonable limits.

If, so that they may make valid comments upon the public world, the central characters in the novels have eccentric private worlds, the majority of other characters fall into readily definable categories. Lacking strong private resources, they are eager to conform to the dictates of a public world whose chaotic physical aspect belies its powerful, conformist influence. Hollywood has the advantage of inhabitants who are there not through any accident of birth but by active choice, who have severed their cultural ties and are willing to adopt the colourations of their chosen milieu. The same could, of course, be said of those characters whom one encounters in novels dealing with the campus. But there is one important difference. Hollywood, the social set-up surrounding the film-making and film-makers, is a world singularly concerned with surfaces, with such histrionic externals as dress, gesture and intonation. Its conformist demands are far more minute and exacting than those imposed by the campus; it is ready to criticise not only the failure to conform but the quality of the overt performance suggesting that conformity. Such

externals become clues not to the private worlds of the characters but evidence of the roles to which they aspire.

It was all nonsense. She mixed badly understood advice from the trade papers with other bits cut out of the fan magazines and compared them with the legends that surrounded the activities of the screen stars and executives. Without noticeable transition, possibilities became probabilities and wound up as inevitabilities. ...all her questions were rhetorical and the stream of words rippled on without a break.

None of them heard her. They were all too busy watching her smile, laugh, shiver, whisper, grow indignant, cross and uncross her legs. The strange thing about her gestures and expressions were that they didn't really illustrate what she was saying.⁸

Were one able to distinguish what, in Norman Mailer's Marilyn, is fact and what fiction, based on some cliché recollected by the author, then one might be tempted to remark that this description of Faye Greener's performance could, with equal veracity, be applied to some of Miss Monroe's. However, this is not possible, as the distinction is so blurred. What the passage does stress are the repercussions of concern with surface alone. Gesture becomes divorced from meaning until it, like the one-dimensional flat, is accepted as a sufficient indication of the desired illusion. The underlying private world is irrelevant, a mere support for the facade, antipathetic to the illusion and therefore best left unexplored.

Faye Greener, the 'actress' in the above, is an aspiring starlet and as such is not expected to possess great psychological depths. Nathanael West accepts the tradition, but makes this inadequacy appalling. With a beauty which is "structural, not a quality of mind or heart",⁹ Faye is incapable of feeling genuine emotion, even when watching the corpse of her father being 'wheeled out' for 'exhibition'

in the funeral parlour. Prior to his death, Greener himself had reached the stage where he could not distinguish real pain from the pretence of pain, wondering, as he suffers a heart-attack, whether he is acting sick or not, "Suddenly, like a mechanical toy that had been overwound, ...he began to spin through his entire repertoire. The effort was purely muscular, like the dance of a paralytic".¹⁰ This theme of meaningless gesture is most extensively explored in The Day of the Locust. It takes various shapes, from the baby who sings sexy songs 'with appropriate gesture and intonation', through Faye and her father, to the young drag artiste whose gestures, 'matronly, tender and aborted', are a species of double-bluff, "what he was doing was in no sense a parody; it was too simple and too restrained".¹¹

Norman Mailer goes some way towards defining the phenomenon in Marilyn, "For an actor lives with the lie as if it were truth. A false truth can offer more reality than the truth that was altered".¹² He intends this to be taken as the excuse for Monroe's lurid and inaccurate accounts of her childhood, envisaging her as living "in the continuing condition of the half-lie, which she imposed on everyone as absolute truth".¹³ Had Marilyn Monroe followed a more professional script, rather than one of her own devising, then perhaps Mr Mailer would have had no need to indulge in such nice speculations but could have accepted the illusion for reality. Myra Breckinridge is more subtle. Excessively alive to her own gestures and intonations, modulating them in imitations of the best screen simulations of whatever emotion seems appropriate, she has reached the point where she may inadvertently slip into such imitations, "I realised too late I was playing Gail Patrick and would have to continue flashing brilliant smiles for the remainder of the two-scene since I seldom abandon a role once I have embarked upon it".¹⁴ The semi-stars in The Last Tycoon play at being

Hemingway characters, "the only way to keep their self-respect",¹⁵ and Cecilia Brady unwittingly exposes how far Hollywood forces even the non-actor to falsify his attitudes when she remarks, "I knew what you were supposed to feel about it (Hollywood) but I was obstinately unhorrorified".¹⁶

Thus, the public world actively encourages the empty display of emotion, allowing characters who are deficient in their private resources to seek succour in psychologically simplified roles, substituting gesture and intonation for emotion, accepting simulations as adequate and so rendering the private world, the actual personality, null and void. Overt behaviour is not a clue to the underlying private reality so much as the signal to the public world, in the code determined by that world, of the reality to which the character aspires. Unlike other public worlds discussed, Hollywood's codes are rooted less in moral or social grounds than in histrionics. Characters who choose to use this code appear in almost every novel in recognisable shapes; there is no allowance made for 'character parts' in which the individual may assert his own subjective interpretations and, indeed, characters who adopt the simplified roles do so largely because they are deficient in the ability to make such interpretations. What Cecilia Brady says of Stahr's idea for a film is also true of such characters, "What gave the play its importance was entirely the situation...".¹⁷

Even entrepreneurs, such as Sammy Glick, Brady and Buck Loner, have to concede to the public world as far as behaviour is concerned and act in stereotyped ways. Shrewd, glib and not over-scrupulous, they are all guilty of fulfilling what Norman Mailer calls 'the producer-laying-starlet syndrome', "Of course, sex dies hard in the sultan, and Hollywood

was built on the contemptuous principle that if an actor is nothing but a mouth, what could an actress be?"¹⁸ The public world's expectations are a species of self-fulfilling prophecy, for where the distinction between fact and fiction is blurred, what happens in fact and what happens according to gossip becomes indistinguishable. Only the screen writers are credited with any resistance to the pressures, given an honourable place in the microcosm because of their imaginative, creative vision. One must also remember that Fitzgerald, West and Schulberg were all, at one time, screen writers themselves and that Vidal sold the film rights of Myra Breckinridge.

There is a close parallel between the manner in which the various styles of architecture in the surrounding area reflect the sets and the way in which the clothes of the inhabitants imitate the costumes of the actors:

A great many of the people wore sports clothes which were not really sports clothes. Their sweaters, knickers, slacks, blue-flannel jackets with brass buttons were all fancy dress.¹⁹

The limited attempt to create fantasy within the walls of the studios again spills over into the 'real' world where, divorced from all rationale, it spreads illogic and rootlessness. If the variety of costume in the streets is less striking in 1975 than it was when West wrote in 1939, it is, nevertheless, a phenomenon which even Myra finds worthy of a pseudo-intellectual comment:

The costumes that the young men now wear as they act out their simple-minded roles, hopefully constructing a fantasy world in order to avoid confronting the fact that to be a man in a society of machines is to be expendable, a soft auxiliary to what is useful and hard.²⁰

These costumed characters are as much a part of the background as any building and they are remarked by the authors in the same way. One begins to wonder, as such details recur from novel to novel, whether the author writing of Hollywood is not forced into adopting a sort of 'realism', becoming passive and even voyeuristic in face of a public world which is already so replete in trivial fictions.

Both West and Fitzgerald give us descriptions of the costumed extras thronging the paths of the studio, effectively emphasising the illogical nature of this 'real' spectacle by rendering it up to us without contextual modification. The problem of holding fast to one's sense of what is actuality is brought home to us by Prince Agge's reactions to 'Lincoln' in The Last Tycoon:

Then he saw Abraham Lincoln and his whole feeling suddenly changed. ...He had been told Lincoln was a great man whom he should admire, and he hated him instead, because he was forced upon him. But now seeing him sitting here, his legs crossed, his kindly face fixed on a forty-cent dinner, ... now Prince Agge, who was in America at last, stared as a tourist at the mummy of Lenin in the Kremlin. This, then, was Lincoln.²¹

The passage is crucial to our understanding of the ability of Hollywood to confuse not merely poor visiting Princes but everyone else as to the facts of history. That Agge's life-long dislike of the figure should be suddenly altered in this way is eloquent of the power exercised over the intellect as well as the imagination. Hollywood can change not only the facts of history (on which, if one is to judge by the comments of Cecilia and her companions on the steps of Jackson's house, it has but the most rudimentary and tenuous of grasps), it can also alter the reactions of other nations to that history. That the actor should be put on a par with the mummy of Lenin once more evokes

the elusive nature of reality in the Hollywood setting; indeed, this 'living and breathing' Lincoln has an even greater power over the imagination of the Prince than any mummy. Having 'life', it has also the potential to alter history as apprehended by the imagination and need not rely on fact. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that the Hollywood interpretation of history may, as here, take precedence over the less 'real' but more realistic interpretation offered by documentary sources. Agge is clearly unaware of the commonplace 'forty-cent dinner'; his vision of American society predisposes him to view it from a historical perspective, and the studios are all too ready to encourage and distort that view.

Thus, we have, as a fairly constant factor in all the novels the environment which surrounds the studios, with its 'conglomerate', culturally alien styles of architecture and its characters with their modes of fancy dress, the studios with their incredible, illogical juxtapositions of people and places from all conceivable ages and lands, the false facades adopted by the majority of characters and the pressures which the public world puts upon its inhabitants to behave in certain ways. Such natural, physical features as the hills and the Pacific Ocean tend to be taken over as props in the creation of the illusion. Myra speaks of the ocean as if it were a hypnotic drug, dulling the senses and the ability to discriminate, and the hills, in The Day of the Locust, are all but smothered by the houses. In The Last Tycoon, Stahr takes his girlfriend to the ocean to enjoy a love scene which, although it may be more suggestive of Fellini than of Griffith, is nevertheless theatrical. The public world strips objects and places of their 'intrinsic worth' and its lack of what William Gass calls 'esthetic purpose'²² is everywhere apparent.

Because, however, the public world is concerned only with surface appearance, this does not mean that the author writing of Hollywood need be similarly restricted. If all the authors choose to present the central area with something approaching verisimilitude, they still remain free to put this area into whatever context they please, be it that of an eccentric private world, a peripheral public world or a wider social set-up. It is through this choice and creation of context that the author may re-assert his artistic control over the finished shape of the overall fictional reality. In doing so he also ensures that, if we are presented, in the novels, with a view of Hollywood which strikes us as owing much to the traditional views which the place has of itself, then we may assume that this too is the result of authorial choice, not of his passivity.

Nathanael West makes effective use of all three of the solutions mentioned. Tod Hackett's is the eccentric private world, Homer and the people in the streets are the peripheral public world and the two combine to put this portrayal of Hollywood into the wider context of artificially created expectations, rousing people of limited imaginations to violence when the expectations are not fulfilled. The frenzied dancers performing feats for the static audience is a major motif in the book. The former group consists of those such as Faye and her father, the latter of those who 'have come to California to die'.

Tod examined him eagerly. He didn't want to be rude but at first glance this man seemed an exact model for the kind of person who comes to California to die, perfect in every detail down to the fever eyes and the unruly hands.²³

As with Tod himself, appearance here is deceptive. Homer is no more typical than Tod is doltish; Tod's artistic training enables him to look beyond the obvious, beautiful people in which Hollywood abounds and to consider those on the fringes of this microcosm whose only link with pictures is through the Mail Order Catalogues from which they choose their ill-fitting and uniformly drab garments. Their main interest in life is watching the other group, feeding on its brittle glamour until, an embittered and hostile minority, this spectacle no longer satisfies their stunted imaginations and thwarted hopes, "it was a mistake to think them harmless curiosity seekers. They were savage and bitter, especially the middle-aged and the old, and had been made so by boredom and disappointment".²⁴ Expecting to find a world of drama, death and violence, because this is what they see in films and read of in newspapers, they ultimately take matters into their own hands and the book ends with a riot of anarchic extremity against which any product of Hollywood looks pale.

West, like the audience, may initially be static in his contemplation of the dancers, merely providing the reasons for their dance and forcing them to ever more hectic and extreme movement, but he finally asserts his artistic control in a telling and active way, making their falsifications and arousals of emotion seem an irresponsible and dangerous exercise. The audience are an imaginative, and one might even say prophetic, counterbalance to the volitionless fantasy of the central public world, rooted more deeply in the visual tradition than those other exponents, the actors:

...he thought how well Alessandro Magnasco would dramatise the contrast between their drained-out, feeble bodies and their wild, disordered minds. He would not satirise them as Hogarth or Daumier might, nor would he pity them. He would paint their fury with respect, appreciating its awful, anarchic power and aware that they had it in them to destroy civilisation.²⁵

This recognition that the audience are not an ephemeral by-product of Hollywood but have a history and a tradition of their own expands the relevance of the novel beyond the immediate microcosm and places it in the ranks of those novels which make a comment on society at large.

The peripheral public world plays a different role in Myra Breckenridge. She does mention the 'type' who come to California, if not to die, at least to escape contact with harsh reality:

...a bronzed, empty face with clear eyes and that vapid smile which the Pacific Ocean somehow manages to impress upon the lips of almost everyone doomed to live in any proximity of those tedious waters. It is fascinating how, in a single generation, stern New England Protestants, grim Iowans and keen New York Jews have become entirely Tahitianized by that dead ocean with its sweet miasmatic climate in which thoughts become dreams while perceptions blur and distinctions are so erased that men are women are men are nothing and everything are one.²⁶

Unlike West, Vidal is not concerned to explore the implications of the effect of setting upon the perceptions of this group. It is, however, salient to note how this passage confirms the notion that inhabitants of Hollywood discard or lose all cultural identity, and that it once more suggests an inherent blurring of the distinctions between appearance and reality. The character who attracts Myra's venom in the above is a lawyer, hired by Buck Loner to discredit her claims to the Academy. One cannot fail to be impressed by Vidal's apparent ability to foreshadow

events, not only does he use 'tapes' to portray Loner's reactions, but this 'type' of lawyer has, of late, brooked large on the Washington scene and, indeed, the last line of the quotation might well be used to sum up the whole Watergate affair, in which distinctions were, most certainly, 'erased'.

Vidal's novel is set in a microcosm within a microcosm, a college perpetuating the myths and modes of Hollywood in faint hopes that a few of its students may find a place in films, "any evidence that there could be a real world outside South California tends to demoralise our students".²⁷ The inmates of this world are doubtly sheltered from what might be called reality, for their enclave is surrounded by another, larger model with the same, unrealistic bent. Created and sustained, for profit, by the one-time celluloid cowboy, Buck Loner, the college is so self-contained that its inhabitants are at once spectators and participants, learning their patterns of behaviour, their intonations and gestures literally in the same school and testing them within its walls. This group are, of course, devoid of the anarchic power of West's audience, all co-operating to maintain the public world in which their private inadequacies are ignored. It is through the eccentric private world of his 'heroine' that Vidal asserts his control over the structure of the fictional reality. Myra's vision owes almost everything to the films of the forties, or at least to her singular interpretation of them. Fanatical and suffering from megalomania, she is nevertheless naïve enough to take such soap operas seriously, seeing them as enshrining all the values now lost to modern society. When one couples this belief with her belief that she has a messianic mission to save the world by turning all men into human capons, one begins to appreciate how clever Vidal is being. The reader cannot accept this central sensibility's insights, yet to dismiss it entails

dismissing a great deal of the public world as well. His discomfiture is further heightened by Myra's uncanny ability to predict what his reactions are liable to be. Interspersed with her 'commentary' are verbatim tape recordings of Buck Loner's feelings about the threatening presence of his niece. As the novel was written in 1968, we must treat these 'tapes' without the cynicism attendant on more recent examples of the genre; nonetheless, we cannot like Loner nor endorse his grasping opinions. Vidal has created the sort of fictional cleft stick familiar to the reader of Nabokov and Barth. It is discussed at length in the sections dealing with the eccentric private worlds of the protagonists.

How Fitzgerald intended to structure the overall fictional reality of The Last Tycoon is not, of course, entirely evident in the unfinished novel. Cecilia Brady is, however, the sort of commentator who unwittingly reveals the flaws in her vision. In spite of her new-found Eastern cynicism and her youthful arrogance, she is deeply immersed in the life of the studios and at the same time as she relates the story of Monroe Stahr she endows him with characteristics which tend to confer on him the status of a myth. Honest enough to admit that "some of my more romantic ideas actually stemmed from pictures - 42nd Street, for example, had a great influence on me",²⁸ she is not sufficiently discerning to see just how far the public world has shaped her private one.

As a 'species of novel ready to play by the rules of biography', Norman Mailer's Marilyn is in a slightly different category from the other works discussed in this chapter. How Mailer interprets the 'rules of biography' is not immediately apparent. Certainly, he debunks most of what others have written on his subject, yet this, as he on occasion admits, is not done on the basis of superior factual knowledge. The

boundaries between fact and diction are blurred in the true Hollywood manner and, whilst Mailer describes the many, small 'myths' which surround Monroe, he seems intent on making her into a super-myth. Were this a work of pure fiction, one might be tempted to regard Mailer's role in it in the same light as one regards Charles Kinbote in Nabokov's Pale Fire. The personality, history and preoccupations of the narrator play no small part in the book, indeed they at times overshadow its ostensible subject. As with the other novelists, however, Mailer leaves the central area of Hollywood intact, asserting his control over the structure of the work by peppering it with long, theoretical discourses, reminiscent of those in Myra Breckinridge, and by endowing Miss Monroe with motives and thoughts based on his vision of her. That vision is, of course, little more than an elaborate, rococo echo of the ideal purveyed by other commentators. Because he is on the 'side' of his heroine, Mailer portrays the studios and the producers as insensitive to her talents, too short-sighted to appreciate her true acting and publicity-getting potential and too concerned with box-office receipts to risk using this innocent who had once posed naked before the camera. Allowing for this predictable prejudice, the portions of the book devoted to Monroe's fight for fame against the Hollywood establishment do seem to present that establishment in 'factual' detail.

What Makes Sammy Run? is, like The Last Tycoon, set in the centre of the Hollywood arena. Its narrator, Al Manheim, is set apart from the 'dancers' in that he is a screen writer with roots outside California. His vision is, however, neither eccentric nor particularly engaging and, in all the history of his love/hate relationship with Hollywood and Sammy Glick, there is little that might cause offence to the extant public world. Schulberg does not risk heresies of the same order as West's, relying

instead on a modicum of exaggeration and the occasional 'cerebral' passage to suggest that the perspective offered is at all individualistic, "If I were trying to tell this as a picture story instead of just putting it down the way it happened, my hate for Sammy Glick would have to be exalted into something noble and conclusive".²⁹

The reader remains unconvinced that this story is distinguishable from the script of a 'B' film. Its 'racy' style, its slick, cynical narrator, its 'love interest' and its improbable central character all remain within inoffensive bounds and might well have sprung from the annals of the studios rather than from the pen of an author capable of putting his own construction on the public world.

Where Nathanael West places the central area of Hollywood in a context of his own creation, Schulberg merely records it. The group of acolytes surrounding Glick 'laugh automatically from time to time' whereas, in The Day of the Locust, laughter is integrated with the theme of empty gesture and is exposed as yet another, sinister distortion of natural, emotional release, "this new laugh was not critical; it was horrible. When she was a child, he (Harry) used to punish her with it".³⁰ In the midst of the final mayhem, Tod Hackett 'knows enough' to laugh with the mob, submitting to their tyranny with an empty gesture, and the book ends with a vision of the commonsensical Tod being carted off in a police wagon, unable to distinguish the noise of the siren from his own laughing and even imitating it. Tears, too, are devalued as emotional currency, "But to those without hope, like Homer, whose anguish is basic and permanent, no good comes from crying. Nothing changes for them".³¹ Even though he is not trying to falsify emotion, the outward signs of it are as empty of meaning for Homer as they are for any occupants of the screen. Faye may 'flutter a tiny lace handkerchief' to her eyes during her father's funeral, but her 'distress' is not so great that she

cannot at first respond to, then reject, Tod's advances. This is, after all, a big moment for her; for once she is the centre of the stage with a definite part to play. As a setting for moments of high human tragedy, the funeral parlour, here, in Waugh's The Loved One and Vidal's Messiah, is portrayed as a theatrical environment. One cannot, in this context, omit to mention Mailer's version of Miss Monroe's 'performance' at the funeral of Johnny Hyde, nor fail to recall the extent to which death-bed or funeral scenes were used as emotional 'banquets' in the nineteenth century novel, allowing the reader to indulge himself, vicariously, in accesses of grief.

Sex, too, undergoes a transformation in the environs of Hollywood. Faye's 'sexy' photograph strikes Tod as "an invitation ...closer to murder than to love",³² whilst the brothel is described as "a triumph of industrial design",³³ making vice attractive by 'skilful packaging' and being run by a lady of impeccable and inviolable refinement. Yet again, the outward appearance is taken as the sum of the whole and West neatly integrates phenomena from the extant world with his major theme of the curious and dangerous relationship between illusion and reality. What Myra does with sex will be discussed later and, of course, Myron's prowess is entirely the result of Dr Menger's handiwork, just as Myra's physical attributes owe more to silicone than to nature. The illusion and the reality have, by 1975, become inseparable.

It is clear that, in a situation where every other aspect of human behaviour has ceased to reflect the private world of the character, language too must suffer. Homer is predictably inarticulate about the experiences which have meant a great deal to him, engaging Tod with a 'muddy flow' of words, out of their usual, sequential order. Faye gives speeches which are 'out of sync' with both her gestures and her

expressions, Harry is reduced to a repetitious round of words whose original meaning has long been lost and Abe, the dwarf, is aggressive and pugnacious, no matter what the context. Manheim, somewhat sourly, remarks that Glick "overcame the fact that he had no literary ability whatsoever by inventing a lingo which everyone took for a fresh and unique style when it was really plain unadulterated illiteracy".³⁴

Myra is as obsessed with language as she is with sex, constantly reminding the reader that, in the time she has taken to write something down, the present tense has become past, excusing a looseness of style on the grounds of the need for spontaneity, insistent that things are 'themselves alone' and therefore spurning both metaphor and simile, and generally discomfiting the reader by persistent reminders of the medium she is using. This aspiration towards total 'realism' is an ironic counterbalance to the fantastic thoughts and events she is recounting and this, together with the conceit that the novel actually consists of notes written for the benefit of her Jewish psychiatrist, makes for a highly complex overall fictional reality. Myra's spoken words are mere adjuncts to the roles she is playing, a part either of her conception of herself as Super-woman or of her accidental assumption of the role of an actress playing a role. In this she mirrors not only Jay Gatsby but Mailer's Marilyn, a lady whose ability to reshape actuality in response to some concept of self is a recurrent theme in her 'biography'.

Turning from the consideration of how the public world is represented in these various novels to the private worlds, one notes how, as in the novels dealing with campuses, authors tend to light on the sensibilities of eccentric outsiders as the major factor in the structuring of the overall fictional reality. This is, of course, scarcely surprising, for it is the arrival of a newcomer which makes the

extant microcosm verbalise its traditional stances, or at least, adopt them. Hollywood differs from the campus in that its inmates, or at least few of them, bear any formal relationship or play any formalised role; they improvise wildly on the fringes of the scene, hoping to attract the spotlight. Therefore, the addition of one more person to the audience is scarcely liable to affect their performance. More, then, than in the campus novel, it is the vision rather than the physical presence of the central sensibility which is important. It is, perhaps, significant that a movie made in 1935 and entitled 'Private Worlds' should be about mental illness. The active private world is, in the context of the Hollywood portrayed in the novels, the rare exception whose outward manifestations might well be taken as symptomatic of insanity, at any rate in a world concerned with surfaces alone and accustomed to the enactment of readily recognisable, psychologically simplified roles.

Budd Schulberg's failure to offer his readers a new perspective on Hollywood and the fact that, of all the characters, Al Manheim is the least eccentric are closely linked. Manheim's ambivalence, unlike that of Myra Breckenridge, is not so much a reflection of the nature of his private world as a symptom of the author's inability to commit truly iconoclastic acts. Where, in other works, Hollywood's involvement with American myths is extensively explored, in What Makes Sammy Run? it is largely disregarded as the book strives to create a new 'myth' in the shape of Sammy. Both Manheim and Schulberg fail to penetrate beneath the surface; frequent passages of generalisation about human behaviour and American society serve only to show how far the author has failed to master the intractable setting and make it, in the words of Henry James, 'his own'. In many ways, the book is reminiscent of the works of the Naturalists, peppered with theoretical discourses which work against the coherence of the fictional reality:

I thought of Sammy Glick rocking in his cradle of hate, malnutrition, prejudice, suspicion, amorality, the anarchy of the poor. ...I was modulating my hatred of Sammy Glick from the personal to the societal. I no longer even hated Rivington Street, but the idea of Rivington Street, all Rivington Streets of all nationalities, allowed to pile up in cities like dung heaps smelling up the world, ambitions growing out of filth and crawling away like worms.³⁵

This shift of the burden of blame from the shoulders of the individual on to those of a hostile environment is pure Social Determinism and, when coupled with a tendency to use language to less than efficient effect, it strengthens our impression that Schulberg, although writing in 1941, belongs not with Dos Passos and Dreiser but with Norris, Crane and company. As Cecilia Brady remarks, "You'd know from the way you talk that we were on our way to Hollywood. ...It's always years and years behind the times".³⁶

Manheim's return to the environment which nurtured Sammy in his search for the truth about the man is, in the light of this, utterly predictable, as predictable, indeed, as his conclusions. Schulberg thus neatly avoids the whole thorny problem of appearance and reality by assuming that the whole improbable story may be justified on the grounds of early experience. His approach is summed up in the phrase, "It was screwy, it was Horatio Alger, it was true".³⁷ Because it is satire, he need not trouble too much about making the tale convincing, yet, although Sammy's rise is itself unlikely, the context of covert status-games played between producers, columnists and writers, the battle between the writers and the studios and many of the other details are patently not exaggerations. The fictional reality is, as a result, hopelessly divided and although Sammy may pass off his illiteracy as a fresh and novel style, Schulberg's readers are perhaps more discerning.

The connotations of the phrase 'eccentric private world' alter radically in the context of this particular public world. In another setting, Tod Hackett might be an altogether unnoteworthy commentator. In Hollywood, his stoical commonsense sets him apart from the rest. This is not to suggest that he is lacking in psychological depths, for we are told that "despite his appearance, he was really a very complicated young man with a whole set of personalities, one inside the other like a nest of Chinese boxes".³⁸ Thus, he may be moved to respond to Faye's obvious sexual allure, but he feels the need to justify this reaction by specious argument, seeking to find in her transparent falsity some sort of worth:

He found still another way to excuse her. He believed that while she often recognised the falseness of an attitude, she persisted in it because she didn't know how to be simpler or more honest. She was an actress who had learned from bad models in a bad school.³⁹

We, of course, can see that Faye does not have the saving grace of naivete. She may be bad at playing the role, but she has chosen to play it and does so to the end, disregarding all humane considerations and substituting apparent concern or whatever else seems appropriate.

When not blinded by Faye, Tod is alive to the ironic possibilities of his environment. Watching the filming of Waterloo, he alone notes that the director, in sending his troops up an unfinished hill, is making a tactical error identical to that made by Napoleon, who sent his troops charging up Mont St Jean, unaware that there was a deep ditch at its foot into which the heavy cavalry would fall. The parallels between the original event and the replication continue as the director responsible is sent to the dog-house, just as Napoleon was sent to St Helena, but there they stop. The whole episode is underwritten by

the insurance companies so that the injured do not suffer but in fact benefit, a wry parody of the cinematic happy ending, and the battle is not lost but re-fought another day. This incident serves to underline how limited the awareness of those actively involved in the recreation of events are; it takes the outsider Tod to note the ironic saliences and recall the actuality.

Narrators such as Manheim would be incapable of making this sort of comment on the scene, for their involvement is with the surface rather than the implicit. Tod imposes his own structure on the public world, using the conceit of the dancers and the audience to express his analysis both in paint and in words. While he reacts in a mundane fashion to the superficialities, this very mundaneness throws the unreality into high relief for the reader, for it is not what the high, artificial drama demands. Tod perceives that the true drama lies in the audience, the crowd who move from funeral to première carrying with them the cloud of "vicious, acrid boredom that trembled on the edge of violence".⁴⁰ His fallibility and self-doubt mark him as a 'real' character, "he wondered if he himself did not suffer from the ingrained morbid apathy he liked to draw in others",⁴¹ and his vision is ultimately endorsed by West, proving that it is the faculties of all the others which are impaired. Faye has her mechanical dreams, hoping to make things real by using mundane techniques, Homer is burdened with emotional impotence and inarticulateness, Earle has no emotion save apathy and violence, Abe is in a perpetual state of aggression and Claude must falsify his interaction with the world by hiding behind a screen of urbanity. None can respond to the world in a simple, self-forgetful way. All but Homer can watch the bloody and violent cock-fight apparently unmoved, unaware of the close parallel between the birds whose natural instincts have been aroused in the interests of spectacle and themselves. It is the

reader who must bear the full horror of the fight, appalled by the gory detail and the spectator's sang-froid. At the end of the novel, it is the turn of the audience to enter the ring, their instincts aroused by what they have seen in films, unable to prevent themselves from committing the violent acts which they have come to regard as their staple diet. Only this time there is no audience. Illusion has become deadly reality and none, not even Tod, can escape.

West counterbalances the expansive, aesthetic vision of Hackett with that of Homer Simpson, the lonely and tragic figure who only appears to belong with the audience, but who in fact has no place anywhere, save within his hopeless and inadequate self. The two men meet on the common ground of admiration for Faye; neither is directly involved with either of the groups and each finds expression through his hands, Tod with paint, Homer with nervous gesture. Where Tod can create his vision on canvas, express his concept of the world both in words and images, Homer can find no means of communication. He has a great need for the escapist fantasies of Hollywood but, because he is trapped in anguished self-awareness, he can make no use of them. Just as he sits daily gazing at his garage door when, by merely moving his chair an inch or two, he might command a view of the entire canyon, so in life he remains fixed in an uncompromising private hell. Having once found himself sexually excited and then frustrated, he lives in perpetual fear of subsequent arousal, imagining that, once set alight, his passions would be uncontrollable, "he somehow knew his only defence was chastity".⁴² As a result, he has become emotionally impotent, living in terror of himself, the world about him and the world of his dreams:

His emotions surged up in an enormous ways, curving and rearing, higher and higher, until it seemed as though the wave must carry everything before it. But the crash never came.⁴³

Going about as if he were 'sleep-walking or partially blind', the only parts of this 'badly made automaton' which show any sign of life are the monumental and incongruous hands, "his hands seemed to have a life and a will of their own".⁴⁴

Homer does not reject the public world on aesthetic or intellectual grounds. He is, quite simply, unable to communicate with it, too terrified to risk intercourse, yet too timid to refuse contact when it is thrust upon him in the shape of the Greeners. He is the dupe of everyone, including himself, a misfit who cannot find a place even in this most variegated of settings. Afraid both of the revealing glare of the light and the unnamed terrors of the dark, "he hurried between lamp-posts where the shadows were heaviest, and came to a full stop for a moment at every circle of light",⁴⁵ the stunted Homer seems to stand for all those inadequate people who lack the physical co-ordination to lose themselves by dancing with the dancers and who cannot even become a part of the audience, their every attempt at conformity turning into a grotesque burlesque of bonhomie which sets them instantly apart. His repressed and impoverished private world cannot be succoured by the fantasies of Hollywood nor by the humanitarian concern of Tod. Life plays the same dirty trick on Homer in Hollywood as in Waynesville. Finding that Faye, far from being the beautiful child he had believed her to be, is merely a 'tramp' prepared to exploit him to the extent of sleeping in his bed with another man, Homer decides to return to Waynesville. He is stayed en route by the riot. More unco-ordinated than ever, clutching a suitcase and wearing a mechanical grin, he at last unleashes the pent-up emotions of years by killing the child, Adore.

West bases the overall structure of The Day of the Locust on a dichotomy taken from the extant public world; Tod Hackett's concern with actors and audience and with the inherent implications for the distinction between appearance and reality acts as a unifying factor, enabling West to put the central public world into a context of his own devising, a context whose careful, artistically distinguished and coherent patterning proves that the author has triumphed over the already fictionalised public world. The private worlds of those such as Earle and Faye, when compared to the worlds of Tod and Homer, seem as thin as the story of 'Le Predicament de Marie' would, were it compared to The Day of the Locust.

It is clear from what there is of The Last Tycoon that F Scott Fitzgerald was no less aware than West of the need for tight artistic control when writing of Hollywood. Like Carraway in The Great Gatsby, Cecilia Brady is obsessed with the man about whom she writes. Knowing that he is already surrounded by legends of all kinds, she nevertheless puts him into a mythic pattern of her own devising:

From where he stood (and though he was not a tall man, it always seemed high up) he watched the multitudinous practicalities of his world like a proud young shepherd to whom night and day had never mattered. He was born sleepless, without talent for rest or the desire for it.⁴⁶

She repeatedly emphasises the 'heights' of Stahr's perceptions, the fact that he seems to be set apart from other men, never allowing her admiration for him to be affected by his lack of interest in her as a woman. The explanation she offers has a historical as opposed to a personal basis, "...he had just managed to climb out of a thousand years of Jewry into the late eighteenth century. ...he cherished the parvenu's passionate loyalty to an imaginary past".⁴⁷ This Disraeliesque 'imaginary past' is entirely in keeping with Hollywood,

the place which deals in traditional myths and the re-creation of history. But one cannot help being aware that it is Cecilia, the child of Hollywood, who is putting this construction on the man. It may be more subtle and more profound than the sort of interpretation one expects the world of the 1940's cinema to produce, but this is not to say that it is not seriously flawed. Cecilia does tend to see herself, too, in larger-than-life terms, imagining a stop-over in the plane journey to the West coast as 'the coastal rich alighting from their cloud in mid-America'. She is struck by the fact that there are 'real cows, with warm flanks' in this place and she does not seem to notice when Wylie White gets his history of Andrew Jackson a little wrong. Thus, the historical perspective which she has is suspect. It bears all the marks of deliberate distortion in favour of greater impact.

Hollywood itself is seen in a far from flattering light. It is possessed of what, at best, might be described as *naïveté*, at worst, as ignorance, failing to understand why an old Russian prince should refuse the part of an old Russian prince, even though it knows he is a Communist; the projected film of the Russian Revolution, 'to be told in terms of America's thirteen states' bears all the marks of the same failure to see beyond the immediate surface. The finished structure of the fictional reality is not, of course, apparent in the unfinished manuscript and, tempting though it might seem to be to use Fitzgerald's notes as clues to his ultimate intention, it would scarcely be legitimate in a thesis whose aim is to analyse novels according to the balance struck, within their pages, between public and private worlds. On the basis of the completed part of the book, one may say that Fitzgerald's portrait of Hollywood is not so far removed from the political manoeuvrings of the studios as that of West. Because, however, his desire to

explore the relationship between Hollywood and traditional American myths is equally clear, the book cannot be classed with What Makes Sammy Run? Even as it stands, the assertion of artistic prerogative is apparent, the awareness of the ironic possibilities unremarked by the public world and the knowledge that its fictions are akin to Faye's 'mechanical dreams' being but two clues that the author's intention was to impose his own structure on the public world.

If neither Tod Hackett nor Cecilia Brady are noticeably eccentric, in the usual sense of the word, Gore Vidal shows that it is possible to use an idiosyncratic private world as the key to the public one. Where, with a Jamesian character, the state of mind of that character may well become the environment, this is not strictly the case with Myra Breckinridge. Taking elements from the public world of Hollywood, such as actors and films, and elements from a book entitled Magic and Myth of the Movies, Vidal creates an enfant terrible whose vision is a lunatic perversion of what Hollywood intended. Like Barth and Nabokov, Vidal structures his overall fictional reality in such a way that the private world of the central character is the only clue the reader has to the public world (the tape transcripts of Buck Loner's reactions to the advent of Myra into his little empire do not add up to an alternative view as they too have Myra as their central focus). By making Myra talk of real films and real actors and by allowing her to use a real book as her bible whilst, at the same time, making her outlook so extreme and so elegantly insane, Vidal further dismays the reader, who is already reeling under the hail of insults hurled at him by this megalomaniac hermaphrodite, "not even I can create a fictional character as one-dimensional as the average reader".⁴⁸ This aggressive approach is coupled with an acute awareness of the failings of the medium being used to communicate with us, "the novel being dead, there is no point to writing made-up stories".⁴⁹

Just as Myra is a psychoanalyst's nightmare, so the novel is a critic's Armageddon. Adopting Myra's own words as a motto, "there will be no speculation, only simple facts simply stated",⁵⁰ and clinging fast to our dichotomy, we must enter the fray in the faint hope that we will find a place among the Chosen Few. Although Myra says a great deal, in styles ranging from the high-literary to the extreme colloquial, and although she prides herself on her control of language, her ability to be realistic and explicit, the most important insights are to be found in inadvertent admissions and unwitting implications. Being a fanatic, she, like Charles Kinbote, mis-judges her readers' reactions from the outset, writing in the happy conviction that we will accept her as Superwoman, will be convinced by her theoretical discourses on films and will share her cynical dislike of all the other characters. She makes no attempt to appeal to us, nor to conceal from us the extent of her ego-mania, but exposes herself at every turn in a manner which, in itself, might be deserving of our sympathy, "I alone have the intuition as well as the profound grasp of philosophy and psychology to trace for man not only what he is but what he must become, once he has ceased to be confined to the single sexual role".⁵¹ Such cavalier assumptions as these, her insistence that she lies outwith the scope of normal human experience and her self-congratulatory appreciation of her own cleverness are, of course, psychological pathognomic and there seems little doubt that Vidal, who is not without his own form of 'cleverness', has carefully constructed a trail of psychological red-herrings for the reader to follow. This technique is not unfamiliar to the reader who has some experience of the works of Vladimir Nabokov (see Chapter VIII).

Myra's admiration for Parker Tyler's Magic and Myth of the Movies directs our attention to that work, where we find the following:

At one time the pagans believed in Diana as goddess of the moon and the hunt. ...like so many legends it holds a mesmeric appeal for the mind; Diana represents, as a matter of fact, a certain sexual type - the vigorous virgin, the woman resistant to love. ...So the essence of myth has also the status of permanent possibility ... in short, desires may have the same power over the mind and behaviour, indeed a much greater power, than facts.⁵²

Grateful as we are to Mr Tyler for this lesson in Classical Mythology, we cannot help but feel that Myra is not alone in the field of cavalier assumptions. The chief interest of the above lies not in what Mr Tyler is saying but in what she, and Vidal, make of it. Just as many of Myra's theories about films are culled from this book, so, it would seem, is her image of herself as "the New Woman whose history is a poignant amalgam of vulgar dreams and knife-sharp realities".⁵³ The 'facts' are that Myra, once Myron, Breckinridge has come to Hollywood to claim her share of the profitable college run by Buck Loner, that she is seriously deranged and believes that her transformation from male to female ought to establish a precedent, "my mission is to re-create the sexes and thus save the human race from certain extinction",⁵⁴ that, under the cover of this 'mission', she indulges in many bizarre sexual exploits until, as a result of a road accident, she is returned to some form of normality, re-adopting the male role and settling down to married life with Mary Ann in what can only be described as a grotesque parody of the cinematic happy ending. It is, of course, significant that one with so tenuous a grasp on what is fact and what fiction should come to Hollywood. Myra's attachment to the place is based on the films it produced in the time of West and Fitzgerald; her journey is not merely the result of practical necessity, it is a pilgrimage. Myra, not content

to legendize herself, is determined to give the Hollywood of the late thirties and early forties mythic status, "During those years the entire range of human (which is to say, American) legend was put on film, and any profound study of those extraordinary works is bound to make crystal-clear the human condition".⁵⁵ Thirty years on, Myra confirms the suspicions voiced by West, that the replications of experience, and the whole set-up surrounding these replications, have come to take precedence over the original event. This transposition of historical significance enables Myra, in Myron, to state that John F Kennedy was important 'only because he was the brother-in-law of Marilyn Monroe'.

Implicit in the disposition of Myra's private world is a comment on the public world, on the sort of scholarship which leads Mr Tyler, with Mr Mailer, to make the medium into the myth. Myra's ideas are, in almost every case, traceable to Tyler, whom Myron emulated by writing such gems as 'The Uterine Vision in Films of the Forties'. Were one to wonder to what end Myra had been created, one might well find the answer in the connections between the two books. Vidal appears to have taken the hypotheses of Tyler's spurious piece of critical erudition and used them to shape a character whose fanatical extremity is a most telling comment on the original inspiration. Tyler, at any rate, seems to have felt himself to be under attack, for in the Preface to the First British Edition of his text, he expends a great deal of time in proving that his work is of slight relevance to Myra Breckinridge, that he is, in fact, "only alluded to as the author of a book".⁵⁶ This response will be examined later, in the context of discussion on fact, fiction and Norman Mailer.

However, just as Myra contradicts her assertion that her book is written as notes for the psychiatrist, Dr Montag, by addressing us directly as readers, so Vidal's work is not limited in its audience to the unappreciative Mr Tyler. The salient question becomes how we are intended to react to this most extraordinary private world.

I shall not begin at the beginning since there is no beginning, only a middle into which you, fortunate reader, have just strayed, still uncertain as to what will be done to you in the course of our common voyage into my interior. No, to our interior. For we are, at least in the act of this creation, as one, each trapped in time; you later, I now, carefully, thoughtfully forming letters to make words to make sentences.⁵⁷

We, who a mere moment ago were 'one-dimensional', have now been engaged in a benign, intimate way, eased into the narrative stream by one who seems to understand our natural fear of its muddy depths. But we, like Cecilia Brady's father, have suspicions, 'developed like muscles' and cannot forget that elsewhere this same narrator talks of "first, excessive flattery with a grain of truth swathed in cultured nacre, and then the lethal puncheroo".⁵⁸ We may also recall, with reference to the journey into the interior:

And, if I may say so, it is presumptuous for anyone even to pretend he can know what another person's interior is really like, short of autopsy. The only thing we can know for certain is the skin.⁵⁹

Seldom, if ever, do we come to know the skin of a fictional character so intimately as Myra's. She devotes long passages, justified by the need for immediacy, to describing her physical attributes, the texture and smell of her person. This is consistent with her general ego-mania; no matter how a passage may begin, it is almost certain to end up amongst

her experiences or her pores, confirming our contention that she is convinced we find her quite as fascinating as she finds herself. As with Jacob Horner, so with Myra we are forced to come to terms with the fact that, no matter what this character may say, she is liable to contradict it, or to inadvertently give it the lie. She is at war with the world, staging a pitched battle on the ground of an utterly ego-centric private world.

Many of her claims must be rejected. We can no more accept that she is writing a literary masterpiece than that she is Superwoman. From the outset, it is obvious that she 'stages' her life according to various films she has seen. Her thorough knowledge of the technical aspects of film-making enables her to support her fantastic notions with impressive detail, "beauteous Fay Wray who I resemble left three-quarters profile if the key light is no more than five feet high during the close shot".⁶⁰ Her tendency to slip into roles accidentally has already been remarked, although it is, of course, a moot point whether to the observer these 'performances' are of the quality she claims or whether, indeed, she is not merely imposing the same flattering construction upon her own actions as she does upon the soap-operas of the Forties. Because she is not really a woman, she finds it remarkably convenient to adopt ready-made personas, with their attendant wardrobe of gestures and intonations. Her view of human interactions, like her view of American history, depends not on the immediate event but on the re-creation of the event on film.

Although she prides herself on her control of language, she is apt to break her own rules. Making a fetish of 'immediacy', eschewing metaphors and similes on the grounds that "things are themselves entirely and do

not need interpretation, only a minimal respect for their precise integrity",⁶¹ (a singularly ironic belief for one who is so obsessed with imitation), she nevertheless forgets such rules in moments of high excitement, "I was like a woman possessed, riding, riding, riding my sweating stallion".⁶² At times, recalling her theory, she is forced into the clumsiest of circumlocutions, "...not unlike (but again not really like)".⁶³ Her sensitivity to the techniques necessary to create the desired impression would also seem to contradict her insistence that "the only useful form left to literature in the post-Gutenberg age is the memoir; the absolute truth, copied precisely from life, preferably at the moment it is happening".⁶⁴ By constantly digressing, by commenting on the need for spontaneity, achieved through 'looseness of style', and by underlining the fact that everyone talks just as she does, she belies her claim to unfalsified writing. It is scarcely surprising that everyone should talk as she does; there are few modes of expression which she leaves unused.

What escapes through the 'fine net' of her dialectic is sufficient to convince the reader that he has found the truth, that Vidal has been adroit enough to make this private world the prime element in structuring the overall fictional reality without allowing it any credence. Her obsessions have a pronounced sexual bias and so, in trying to achieve her 'intellectual' goal, the living out of all her fantasies and the consequent overstepping of the bounds of human experience, she can indulge in excesses made respectable by their 'higher' purpose. In the scene where she anally assaults Rusty, she experiences personal gratification but, in quieter moments, chooses to interpret the whole thing as the New Woman subjugating the archetypal male. Explicit sexual detail is further excused on the grounds that it is part of

her war with the analyst, Montag, "these graphic notes (about an orgy) are really for your benefit, dear Randolph. Examples of the way the goyim you essentially despise behave".⁶⁵ Vidal's game is constructed along similar lines. Whilst one would hesitate to accuse him of writing pornography under the guise of a modern, psychological novel, one can see that he is intent on titillating his readers under the pretext of the overall fictional reality and is, even, perhaps using Tyler's book as an excuse for creating literary and critical mayhem. The Jewish dentist-turned-psychiatrist, "it was the tongue, not the teeth, which interested him",⁶⁶ belongs, with similar figures in Portnoy's Complaint and The End of the Road, in a tradition where the analyst is used as a literary device, allowing the central character to lay bare his private world. It is also the case that, where the structure of the overall fictional reality hinges upon a highly disturbed, and therefore unreliable, private world, the reader is forced to make certain re-adjustments in his approach to the work. What is written between the lines, the unwitting admissions of such characters, comes to be as important as what is actually written 'by them'. The matter is discussed at length in Chapter VIII, in relation to Pale Fire and The End of the Road.

It comes as no surprise to find that, at the end of the book, Myra the Myth is exploded by her alter ego, Myron, "I don't suppose it would be giving away any secrets to say that like so many would-be intellectuals back East Myra never actually read books".⁶⁷ But we cannot help but mourn her passing. Spiteful and deluded though she was, at least her caustic tongue occasionally produced gems of wit the like of which the dull, smug Myron never dreamed. Or did he? The sequel to Myra Breckinridge, simply entitled Myron, deals with the war between these two 'halves', the simplest explanation of its strange plot would be

that it was a dream of Myron's but, as history appears to have been altered by its occurrence (John F Kennedy is still a senator trying to get elected to the White House in 1973), this cannot be so. Now a Chinese caterer, powell-less worker for planned parenthood, racist, Communist-fearing-Nixon supporter, Myron's suburban idyll is shattered by the re-emergence of Myra and his subsequent transportation through the television screen into 1948 and the making of the film 'The Siren of Babylon'. This is only the beginning of what for Myron is a nightmare and for Myra, a dream re-awakened. As the pair struggle for control of the same body, she determined to caponise the entire male population and to save Hollywood from decline, he to return to Mary-Ann and the dogs, we see that Myra has lost none of her ability to mythologise herself:

As the world knows, my total victory over Rusty et al., put an end not only to the American conquest of Asia but to the previously undisputed primacy of the combustion engine.

Unhappily, my creation of Unisex proved to be no more than a stopgap. ...it is now evident that I have doomed the entire human race to death from famine and pestilence as the result of overpopulation, because, thanks to my efforts, the American male now lacks the arrogant sexual thrust to conduct those wars that in the past were so necessary to population control...⁶⁸

Interesting though the conceit that her failure is responsible for our present ills may be, one cannot help but feel that the joke has been too long in the telling. One must admire Vidal's inventiveness; his substitution of the names of justices instrumental in a ruling on obscenity for certain anatomical terms, on the assumption that this procedure will lend his novel an unquestionably high moral tone, is an amusing, lexicographical exercise. The running battle between the two 'halves' of M. Breckinridge shows that both are equally deluded,

Myron as to his 'straightness' and the 'rightness' of American society and Richard Nixon, Myra as to her mythic status and her power to change the world, and Vidal happily abandons any pretensions to 'reality' in his fiction; unlikelyhoods which, in Myra, could be put down to the delusions of a private world are here an integral part of the overall fictional reality. Yet, in spite of the superbly sinister Mr Williams, the seedy Mannix Motel and the centrality of a singularly awful film, in spite of witty bon mots and amusing character sketches, complex fictive levels and equally complex sexual role-playing, one cannot but object that the book is too clever and too contrived. Myron may not have been the most suitable mausoleum for Myra, but the exhumation is unwarranted, and even the vision of Richard Nixon trying to gain admission to this 'other world' to escape Watergate cannot change this opinion. The book may, of course, make a more rewarding film.

The Myra who looked on Hollywood as "the source of all this century's legends"⁶⁹ and who regarded the studios of MGM as her 'rightful kingdom' was initially a brilliant inspiration, for through her Vidal could explore the relationship of Hollywood to the historical consciousness of America. That the conclusions he drew were remarkably akin to those suggested in 1939 by West, namely that the process of artifice and its attendant myths were taking precedence over the original experiences, is a tribute to the insight of the earlier novelist. The thoroughness and the clarity of the vision found in The Day of the Locust may largely explain why what has subsequently been written of Hollywood has tended to seem commonplace. West's analysis could not be bettered. By placing Myra on the campus of a college designed to shelter aspiring stars from the harsh reality of the declined film industry, and by making her obsessed with the heyday of that industry, Vidal can avoid dealing with the changes in the actual world. Acting as taught by Buck Loner

bears the stamp of his era; the 'life stories' of his staff all follow recognisable film-scripts, "We all recognised the plot of 'The Seventh Veil' and so were able to ask her the right questions to help her complete the fantasy",⁷⁰ and even the students are 'throwbacks' to the forties. For Myra, the giant figure of a chorus-girl, forever revolving outside the window of her hotel room, is 'the image of deity'. For the reader it is reminiscent of McLuhan's 'gyrating mechanical dolls', the reduction rather than the elevation of human effort, eloquent less of glamorous aspiration than of crass, impersonal and tawdry dreams. Even the white-walled tyres of Babbitt's delight had more personal meaning. The shape of Myra's private world, owing as it does a great debt to a mythical public world, is a comment on that world of puerile fantasy. As Parker Tyler says, "It is the status of the background that determines the strength of a myth and of its perspective in human history".⁷¹

The connection between his text and Myra Breckinridge is more obvious than he seems prepared to admit. When, for example, he talks of "the tendency of screen stories to emphasise - unintentionally - neuroses and psychopathic traits discovered and formulated by psychoanalysis",⁷² we can see how Myra is the embodiment of this remark, although, of course, the same trend is discernible in many other modern novels and this too is undoubtedly a factor in her creation. Vidal's technique, like that of Tyler, might well be called the 'psychoanalytic-mythological', used the more effectively because it has fiction and not critical conviction as its end. Vidal, unlike Myra, does not get Tyler wrong. She may well omit the negative from the latter's remark, "things are not always what they seem"⁷³ and so pervert it into an unwieldy theory of literature; he does not make the same mistake, literally translating Tyler's theory into superb fictional practice, revealing the idiocy of that theory without in the least doing disservice to the quality of the

fiction. Tyler's analytic powers, already cast into doubt by the novel, are confirmed by his insistence that he is 'only mentioned' as the author of a book. This so trivial reference has, nevertheless, led him to expand his introduction from the original eight to an amazing seventeen pages. He reports that, on being commiserated with over his inclusion in Myra, "I rebutted silently, by looking as serenely complacent as possible. No doubt my mute proud rebuttal was highbrow and esoteric, if not also supersubtle".⁷⁴ We can but hope that this audible echo of Myra's voice is a deliberate parody.

It is clear, from this complex interweaving of fact and fiction, so reminiscent of the controversy surrounding Randall Jarrell's Pictures From An Institution (See Chapter VIII), that the distinction between the two, treated with such naïveté in the central public world, becomes, elsewhere, a matter of compelling interest. This chapter concludes by looking at that 'species of novel biography', Norman Mailer's Marilyn, a book whose pretensions to a factual basis suffer from the author's mixed motives and metaphors as well as his obtrusive personality. Such complexity as is involved in Mailer's interweaving of fact and fiction has nothing to do with the creation of an artistically distinguished overall fictional reality; that reality is undistinguished and the complexity is a mark not of narrative control, but of its absence. Marilyn might well be described as a consideration of the public image of the private world of Marilyn Monroe, seen from the point of view of the private world of Norman Mailer, who is himself a worshipper at the public shrine. Of course, Mailer believes, in a manner reminiscent of Myra, that he specially privileged, that his insight into her character are far removed from the 'factoids' purveyed by other writers on the same topic. The subject could suggest a whole new definition of our

dichotomy, based on the 'public' and 'private' lives of those who live in this glare of the spotlight. Because, however, Mailer chooses to cast his work in the curious fact/fiction mould, the terms are quite adequate in their original definition. In spite of all the strenuous inductive efforts of Mr Mailer, the Marilyn who emerges from his book bears a strong resemblance to West's Faye Greener. Telling us of Monroe's problems with the line "It's me, Sugar", admitting that she needs no less than forty-seven takes to get it right, Mailer, rather like Myra, does not appear to realise that the reader may choose to interpret the incident according to his own lights, rejecting the suggestion that "she is searching into the nuances of identity.

...she is working out a problem of psychic knots worthy of R D Laing".⁷⁵ Likewise, when Monroe asks where the headlights are on a horse, Mailer leaps in to prevent us reaching for the most obvious explanation, "She would not know about headlights on a horse because she would assume that after the barbarity of the saddle and the cinch, all the other accessories were possible".⁷⁶

The similarities between Marilyn and Myra extend beyond the improbable interpretation of events. Mailer is much concerned with putting his subject into her proper context, not the context of well-documented childhood and career, but the context of American Myths. To this end, he is quite unscrupulous. She is, we are told, "the last of the myths to survive the long evening of the American dream".⁷⁷ Reinforcing this idea, Mailer envisages her as having "all the cleanliness of clean American backyards",⁷⁸ chooses to see her memory of watching a man shoot a dog in terms of the "backed-up intensity of the frontier jammed at last into a suburban veranda",⁷⁹ calls part of her upbringing "the classic American small-town comedy",⁸⁰ describes her as creating "one last American innocent. ...She is as simple and as healthy as the

whole middle of the country"⁸¹ and concludes that, in 1955, she was "the most magical and marvellous heroine of New York".⁸² When it comes to 'making a subject his own', in the Jamesian sense, Mr Mailer appears to exalt the fictional element over the factual in a manner which can only be called astounding. The 'dog' incident has no definite factual basis, yet with this as a premise, the author goes on to overlay it with a burden of significance which would be hard to justify even were the initial premise indisputable fact. Again and again one feels that Mailer's 'looseness of form' is, like that of Myra, not a clever construct serving the purpose of communication but the excuse for a great deal of unwarranted induction.

Mailer's methods are in keeping with his overall structure. Hoping, with this 'species of novel' to capture her 'elusive charm' and in the end offer "a literary hypothesis of a possible Marilyn Monroe",⁸³ he gives himself almost unlimited scope, which he abuses to the full. Satisfied that, by bringing, or dragging, in the frontier, the American innocent, the small town, the backyard and other such emblems of the nation's identity, he has put his subject firmly in her cultural and historical pattern, he superimposes on this design another, more metaphysical and speculative one. Mailer has a sharp eye for coincidences which, to him, appear to point to the operations of an ironic, if not malevolent, Fate, "At every step of her life, coincidences spring underfoot like toadstools".⁸⁴ These coincidences, like much else in the book, are hypotheses wrought by the author who at one stage proudly proclaims, "we have now transgressed every border of history".⁸⁵ A bowl of tomato juice spilt down her groom's jacket, a woman reporter killed whilst chasing the honeymooners' car and the bride's period are pulled together into what Mailer calls 'a vision of blood', a vision with serious, if vague, implications for the tenuous sanity of the heroine.

Her name may be linked not only with myths but with those other great American figures, notably the Kennedys and Nixon, by a similarly elastic process. Juggling with a twenty-mile distance between their early homes and the assumption that Monroe's upbringing qualified her to be one of the Silent Majority, a phrase used, much later, by Richard Nixon, Mailer implies that their lives were linked by some mystic thread. Elsewhere, he states the connection more explicitly, "...it is possible she is already (like Richard Nixon) searching for an imperial sense of self-justification".⁸⁶ Because Marilyn watched the inauguration of John F Kennedy whilst she was in Dallas, the author feels obliged to underline the significance, "the most electric of the nations must naturally provide the boldest circuits of coincidence".⁸⁷ One might add that the most eclectic of authors must naturally provide the flimsiest of fictions.

The form Mailer has invented, if taken seriously, raises important questions about the nature of fact and fiction. Ever since, in 1898, Norris's hero, Condy, gave vent to the cry 'Life is better than literature', there has been a growing feeling that the former was overtaking the latter in terms of sheer improbability; such books as Capote's In Cold Blood brought the issue under serious consideration in the 1960's and such works as Mailer's Miami and the Siege of Chicago also raised the question of the place of the writer of fiction in the face of modern complexity. With Marilyn, however, Mailer appears to settle the issue; it matters little whether the deranged sensibility responsible for the shape of the overall fictional reality belongs to the author himself or to a character created by the author. As Mailer says, "... the inductive voice speaks with no more authority than the romantic, that is it is also an unproved thesis, and does no more than scorn the first thesis".⁸⁸ Because he has stipulated his

own terms, he seems to feel secure in the belief that the overall structure cannot be faulted either on the grounds that it pays scant attention to the facts of Monroe's life or that it weaves improbable and complex fictions.

Mailer asserts his control over his material in a variety of ways. We have already examined two of the means by which he attempts to fit his heroine into a pattern of mythic and historical significance, implying rather than stating her place in that design. He disposes of the extant fictions surrounding her by dismissing them and their perpetrators in a high-handed fashion, although it must be noted that he is not averse to utilising some of their 'insights' when all else fails, "One can only offer a set of quotes from Marilyn ben Hecht fished right out of the Factoidal Gulch, but there is always hope it may be equal at least to a poor translation".⁸⁹ Myra, too, despises the man on whom her sense of security depends; Mailer forces Hecht to play Montag to his Myra. Both narrators are addicted to the extended theoretical discourse and, if Mailer is more catholic in his choice of subjects, both are agreed on the unfortunate influence of television, in Mailer's words, "living like an inchworm on the aesthetic of the drug-deadened American belly".⁹⁰ Presumably because he is writing of Hollywood, he speaks of the cinema as 'the occult church' of film', a phrase which Myra would undoubtedly applaud. Having wasted some time speculating about the character of Marilyn's unknown father, he performs a Myraesque volte face, coming, in one swift leap of the pen, to the conclusion that such speculations are "the acme of the facetious".⁹¹

It is here that one feels impelled to draw a line, to insist that even in so whimsical a pursuit as the capturing of an elusive personality with a web of biographical fiction, there must be some basic discipline.

own terms, he seems to feel secure in the belief that the overall structure cannot be faulted either on the grounds that it pays scant attention to the facts of Monroe's life or that it weaves improbable and complex fictions.

Mailer asserts his control over his material in a variety of ways. We have already examined two of the means by which he attempts to fit his heroine into a pattern of mythic and historical significance, implying rather than stating her place in that design. He disposes of the extant fictions surrounding her by dismissing them and their perpetrators in a high-handed fashion, although it must be noted that he is not averse to utilising some of their 'insights' when all else fails, "One can only offer a set of quotes from Marilyn ben Hecht fished right out of the Factoidal Gulch, but there is always hope it may be equal at least to a poor translation".⁸⁹ Myra, too, despises the man on whom her sense of security depends; Mailer forces Hecht to play Montag to his Myra. Both narrators are addicted to the extended theoretical discourse and, if Mailer is more catholic in his choice of subjects, both are agreed on the unfortunate influence of television, in Mailer's words, "living like an inchworm on the aesthetic of the drug-deadened American belly".⁹⁰ Presumably because he is writing of Hollywood, he speaks of the cinema as 'the occult church of film', a phrase which Myra would undoubtedly applaud. Having wasted some time speculating about the character of Marilyn's unknown father, he performs a Myraesque volte face, coming, in one swift leap of the pen, to the conclusion that such speculations are "the acme of the facetious".⁹¹

It is here that one feels impelled to draw a line, to insist that even in so whimsical a pursuit as the capturing of an elusive personality with a web of biographical fiction, there must be some basic discipline.

And this Mailer lacks. To deal with an essentially inarticulate character, whose life is hedged about with speculation, rumour, publicity releases and gossip, by imbuing her every action with obscure motives and replacing myths you have discarded with new, more unlikely, versions of the same, is a dubious enterprise. One suspects that Mailer is merely re-working the old stories, touching them up with more explicit sexual references and a greater psychological bias, and relying for success less on any intrinsic merit in the book itself and more on the name of the subject and the superb photographs. Had these photographs been touched up as clumsily as the stories, then the whole would have been a dismal failure.

She is now the secret nude of America's dream-life - secret precisely because it has been so public. ...She is now part of that core of psychological substance out of which one concocts one's life judgements. Marilyn has become the protagonist in the great American soap opera.⁹²

With, one must add, a little help from Mr Mailer.

The private world of Marilyn Monroe, ostensibly the focus of the overall fictional reality, does not emerge with any coherence or conviction from Mailer's welter of lay psychology, sociology, biography and speculation. This is partly the result of his desire to leave no theoretical stone unturned, no public myth unmolested, and partly the outcome of his outrageous wiring up of the circuits of coincidence. But there are two other factors crucial to the failure of the overall structure. One is the language which Mailer uses. In his eagerness to 'place' Miss Monroe in the historical and psychological context of the nation he prefixes almost everything with the word American, without ever being foolhardy enough to venture upon a definition of this phenomenon. We begin to feel that we are here discussing Superauthor,

the mate of Superwoman, for Mailer again mirrors Myra in his manner of ranging freely over modes of expression. He swings from such pretty metaphors, replete with single-entendre, as "the pimples of the adolescent working his first gas pump would also pump for her",⁹³ into the depths of pseudo-psychological jargon:

...to comprehend psychosis, and the psychology of those who are exceptional (like our heroine), it could be time to look upon human behaviour as possessed of a double root. Whilst the dominant trunk of our actions has to be influenced by the foreground of our one life here and now and living, the other root may be attached to some karmic virtue or debt some of us (or all of us) acquire by our courage or failure in the lives we have already lived. If such a theory is certainly supported by no foundation, nonetheless it offers some assistance in comprehending the insane, since it would suggest we are not all conceived in equal happiness or desperation.⁹⁴

Whilst one must admire Mr Mailer's audacity and willingness to tackle any topic without a second thought, baseless hypotheses are not the firmest of footings for either radical views of psychology or for novel biographies. Of course, unless Mailer is talking here of some form of re-incarnation, then he is mistaken in assuming that the notion of a dual psychological basis is new; 'it could be time' must refer to the chronology of the book, unless Mr Mailer is grossly ignorant of the fact that it was at least sixty years ago that Jung first put forward his concept of the collective unconscious.

Such vast tracts of theoretical discourse and the very varied language of the rest of the book, a variety which may, indeed, reflect the variety of sources from which Mr Mailer drew inspiration, combine to work against coherent structure. The reader frequently finds himself confused as to just what area of Miss Monroe's experience is being dealt with at any given point. The double-personality theory is put

the mate of Superwoman, for Mailer again mirrors Myra in his manner of ranging freely over modes of expression. He swings from such pretty metaphors, replete with single-entendre, as "the pimples of the adolescent working his first gas pump would also pump for her",⁹³ into the depths of pseudo-psychological jargon:

...to comprehend psychosis, and the psychology of those who are exceptional (like our heroine), it could be time to look upon human behaviour as possessed of a double root. Whilst the dominant trunk of our actions has to be influenced by the foreground of our one life here and now and living, the other root may be attached to some karmic virtue or debt some of us (or all of us) acquire by our courage or failure in the lives we have already lived. If such a theory is certainly supported by no foundation, nonetheless it offers some assistance in comprehending the insane, since it would suggest we are not all conceived in equal happiness or desperation.⁹⁴

Whilst one must admire Mr Mailer's audacity and willingness to tackle any topic without a second thought, baseless hypotheses are not the firmest of footings for either radical views of psychology or for novel biographies. Of course, unless Mailer is talking here of some form of re-incarnation, then he is mistaken in assuming that the notion of a dual psychological basis is new; 'it could be time' must refer to the chronology of the book, unless Mr Mailer is grossly ignorant of the fact that it was at least sixty years ago that Jung first put forward his concept of the collective unconscious.

Such vast tracts of theoretical discourse and the very varied language of the rest of the book, a variety which may, indeed, reflect the variety of sources from which Mr Mailer drew inspiration, combine to work against coherent structure. The reader frequently finds himself confused as to just what area of Miss Monroe's experience is being dealt with at any given point. The double-personality theory is put

to effective use throughout the book, often providing a much-needed solution to apparently contradictory pieces of evidence. But this duality is itself a factor furthering the confusion, and, when one adds to the dual personality of the heroine the intrusive personality of the author, the complications increase apace. He is keen, as children say nowadays, to get a piece of the action and is not hampered in doing so by any nice sense of scruple. Confessing that, "One of the frustrations of his life was that he (that is, Mailer) had never met her (Monroe), especially as a few people he had known had been so near to her",⁹⁵ he shows how near the miss was, as ever ignoring the obvious explanation that the acquaintance of those close to Marilyn with Mailer might well have been the reason for the absence of a meeting. He tells us that, in their impoverished days, he and Arthur Millar had shared the same brownstone. Years later, Millar, now married to Monroe, does not invite our hero to visit them, in spite of a mere five-mile journey between their respective homes. As the shades of Myra fade for a moment, those of Kinbote are awakened. Mailer is honest enough to admit that even he might have failed to make a go of marriage to Monroe, contents himself with 'this study which must stray towards the borders of magic' and promptly plays a cabalistic game with the letters of his own name and those of Marilyn Monroe.

It is to be regretted that there is no discernible design underlying the confusion of fictive levels in this book, that the discussion of the nature of the work included in its pages is not part of a clever game with the reader but merely an attempt to enlighten him (and, one suspects, to help the author to get his ultimate intentions straight). There seems little doubt that Mailer is a character in this as in others of his works, here playing the casting director and producer of a fancy fantasy version of the life of Marilyn Monroe.

Had the reader been allowed to watch the finished 'film', or even to look through the camera at the scene, rather than being forced to stand where he must see the director as well as the actors, then he might have had a more unified impression of the central action. As it stands, the book brings to mind a remark made by that other intruder in a film, Myra Breckinridge:

Like my countrymen, I am always thrilled when someone entirely without talent is able to become through strenuous effort and even pathological publicizing of himself a part of the nation's consciousness and for a season famous because that is our American way.⁹⁶

Had Mailer chosen to write of an admiral, a statesman or a politician, he could scarcely have applied the same method. Only a subject coming to him already surrounded by the confusions of fact and fiction inherent in Hollywood could be treated in such a way. However, where Vidal successfully employed exaggeration, psychohistory and mythology to create a fictional character, Mailer's attempt to do likewise founders on its factual basis. Instead of using it as an outline requiring a skilled colourist to give it depth, he covers it with messy daubs, losing the features of the original and failing to superimpose an abstract impression of any great merit.

If it is true that the already mythologised nature of his subject had a considerable influence on Norman Mailer, this is less true of the other authors discussed in the course of this chapter. Mailer may attempt to justify his covert, but nevertheless wholesale, adoption of the legends purveyed by Hollywood, the studios and the circumambient publicity machine, on the grounds that he is writing a 'special' kind of fiction. This argument has, however, a hollow ring to it and the mere claim that he is imposing a new shape on the material carries

little conviction in face of the fact that he is only distorting and exaggerating it. Schulberg makes no claims for his work and seems content with simple reproduction spiced with a few 'theoretical' passages. Vidal, West and Scott Fitzgerald may re-create the central public world with something akin to realism, but they put this world into a context of their own devising, all stressing the importance of myth and exploring its repercussions for the private world's grasp of reality. Intensity of emotion, dramatic experiences and histrionic predilections are not the prerogative of Myra; Cecilia Brady too feels impelled to give Stahr 'larger than life' qualities, to see her relationship to him in ways that owe an obvious debt to films she has seen and to adopt roles when entering the presence of her 'hero'. The structure of West's overall fictional reality differs from that of the other two in that it does not hinge to the same extent upon the perceptions of one character. His minor characters, such as Faye Greener and Homer Simpson, are important as representatives of groups in the public world, their private worlds being translated into telling comments on the nature of the public world to which they have willingly come. It is crucial that Hackett's vision, whilst credited with comparative commonsense, should also be essentially dramatic and visual. Through his private world West puts Hollywood in the context not of American myths (although this aspect is thoroughly dealt with) but of such 'spectacles' as Sodom and Gomorrah. All three authors note that the public world is divorced from a meaningful connection with history and with the consequent moral realities; this historical/psychological pattern, so fundamental in the works of Faulkner and so necessary a precondition of other public worlds, comes, in the context of Hollywood, to be translated into yet another one-dimensional facade, a mime whose gestures alone are significant.

The resemblances between the novels discussed in this chapter are perhaps greater than the mere coincidence of setting would warrant. In each the private world of the central characters and the public world of the author's creation are disposed around the self-fictionalising centre of the actual public world, and the insights of the authors into the relationship between this centre and American myths and into the implications for the individual of a concern with surfaces alone, also bear a resemblance which can only be explained by the fact that, in its hidden depths as well as in its overt manifestations, Hollywood is Hollywood. In a rare moment of insight, Parker Tyler, that well-known apologist of Hollywood, defined the phenomena to which we refer. It seems fitting that he, at least once, should be given the privilege of the final word:

...in a sense, every spectator of art is also a maker, psychologically speaking, and inversely a maker a spectator, both psychologically and literally, because the latter sees and forms notions of the finished work whether his own or another's.⁹⁷

NOTES

1. Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust, 1st pub. 1939, this ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), p.94
2. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon, 1st pub (New York: Scribner's 1941), this ed., ed. Edmund Wilson, 7th ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), p.32
3. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p.32
4. Budd Schulberg, What Makes Sammy Run?, 1st pub 1941, this ed. 6th ed. (New York: Bantam Classic, 1964), p.148
5. West, op. cit., p.11
6. West, op. cit., p.12
7. Schulberg, op. cit., p.235
8. West, op. cit., p.50
9. West, op. cit., p.85
10. West, op. cit., p.47
11. West op. cit., p.110
12. Norman Mailer, Marilyn, A Biography (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), p.18
13. Mailer, op. cit., p.170
14. Gore Vidal, Myra Breckinridge, 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1968), p.43
15. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p.85
16. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p.5
17. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p.50
18. Mailer, op. cit., p.78
19. West, op. cit., p.10
20. Vidal, op. cit., p.66
21. West, op. cit., p.60
22. William Gass, 'Even if, by all the Oxen in the World (polemic)', in Frontiers of American Culture, ed. Browne, Crowder, Lokke & Stafford, Purdue University Studies (USA, 1968), p.197
23. West, op. cit., p.32
24. West, op. cit., pp.146-147

25. West, op.cit., p.106
26. Vidal, op.cit., p.187
27. Vidal, op.cit., p.39
28. Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.23
29. Schulberg, op.cit., p.53
30. West, op.cit., p.52
31. West, op.cit., p.60
32. West, op.cit., p.19
33. West, op.cit., p.24
34. Schulberg, op.cit., p.16
35. Schulberg, op.cit., p.203
36. Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.13
37. Schulberg, op.cit., p.28
38. West, op.cit., p.10
39. West, op.cit., p.61
40. West, op.cit., p.89
41. West, op.cit., p.105
42. West, op.cit., p.59
43. West, op.cit., p.41
44. West, op.cit., p.43
45. West, op.cit., p.41
46. Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.19
47. Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.142
48. Vidal, op.cit., p.42
49. Vidal, op.cit., p.42
50. Vidal, op.cit., p.9
51. Vidal, op.cit., p.218
52. Parker Tyler, Magic and Myth of the Movies, 1st British ed. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971), p.27
53. Vidal, op.cit., p.6

54. Vidal, op.cit., p.7
55. Vidal, op.cit., p.14
56. Tyler, op.cit., p.8
57. Vidal, op.cit., p.4
58. Vidal, op.cit., p.49
59. Vidal, op.cit., p.201
60. Vidal, op.cit., p.3
61. Vidal, op.cit., p.8
62. Vidal, op.cit., p.184
63. Vidal, op.cit., p.14
64. Vidal, op.cit., p.18
65. Vidal, op.cit., p.107
66. Vidal, op.cit., p.167
67. Vidal, op.cit., p.263
68. Gore Vidal, Myron, A Novel (London: Heinemann, 1975), p.177
69. Vidal, Myra, p.10
70. Vidal, Myra, p.84
71. Tyler, op.cit., p.26
72. Tyler, op.cit., p.28
73. Tyler, op.cit., p.32
74. Tyler, op.cit., p.10
75. Mailer, op.cit., p.177
76. Mailer, op.cit., p.47
77. Mailer, op.cit., p.16
78. Mailer, op.cit., p.15
79. Mailer, op.cit., p.33
80. Mailer, op.cit., p.27
81. Mailer, op.cit., p.123
82. Mailer, op.cit., p.139
83. Mailer, op.cit., p.20

84. Mailer, op.cit., p.33
85. Mailer, op.cit., p.28
86. Mailer, op.cit., p.21
87. Mailer, op.cit., p.210
88. Mailer, op.cit., p.23
89. Mailer, op.cit., p.75
90. Mailer, op.cit., p.15
91. Mailer, op.cit., p.25
92. Mailer, op.cit., p.94
93. Mailer, op.cit., p.15
94. Mailer, op.cit., p.23
95. Mailer, op.cit., p.19
96. Vidal, Myron, p.202
97. Tyler, op.cit., p.18

CHAPTER SIX

William Faulkner: His Public World

Faint, illegible text in the upper half of the page, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.

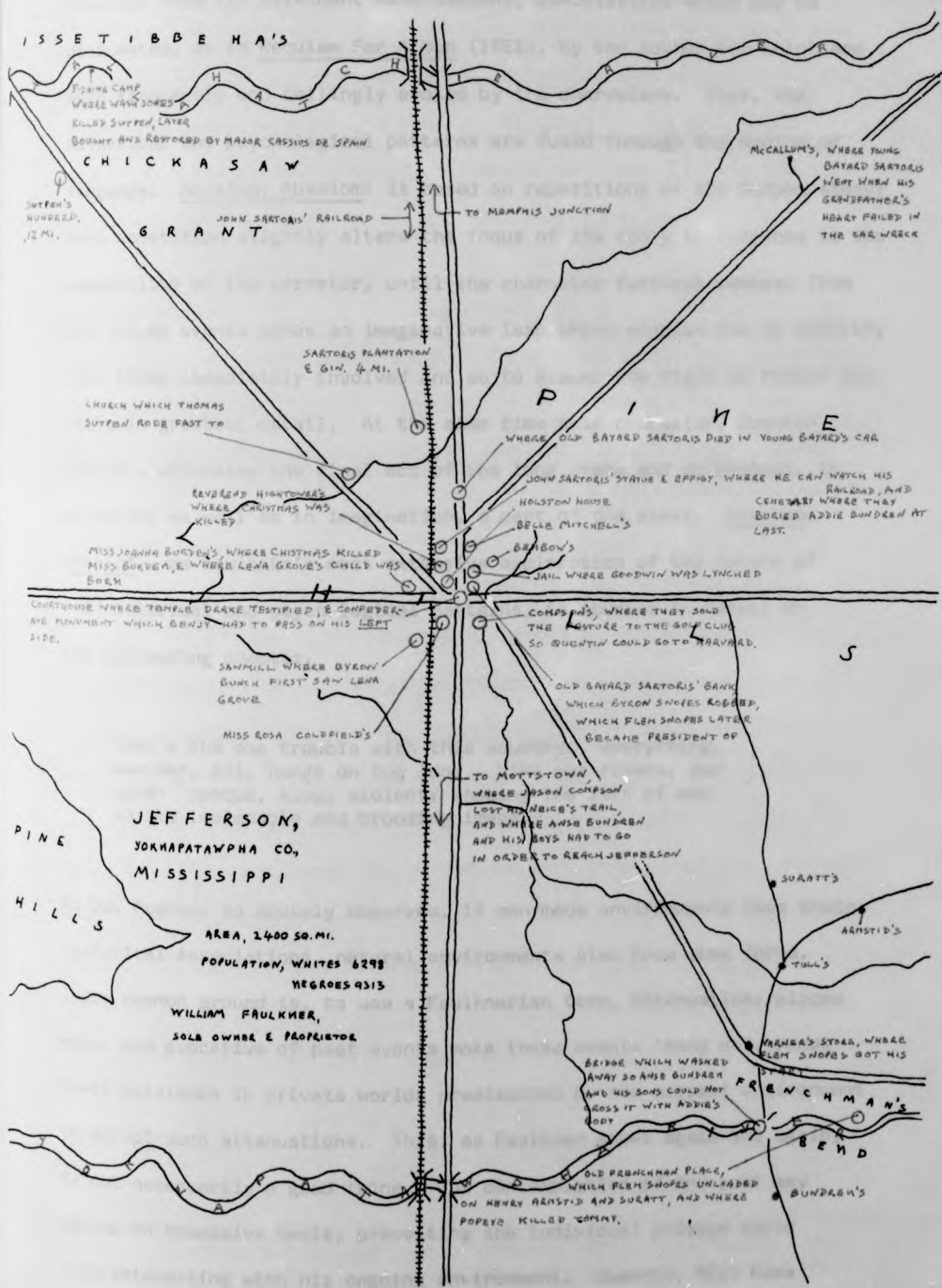
Faint, illegible text in the lower half of the page, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.

Faint, illegible text at the bottom of the page, possibly a footer or page number.

Towards the end of Absalom, Absalom! (1936), Quentin Compson says of the South, "You can't understand it. You have to be born there".¹ His statement is neither dismissive nor egotistical, but is the despairing acknowledgement of the impossibility of explaining his cultural heritage to an outsider. Faulkner is more successful, although it required thirty years of painstaking writing to make the reader 'understand' his vision of the South and although, in the process, he presented that reader with, in the words of Robert Penn Warren, "the most challenging single task in contemporary American literature for criticism".² The task is challenging in both size and complexity. Because Faulkner created an entire public world, complete with history, topography and social structure, and placed most of his novels within this meticulously imagined setting, it is proposed to devote one chapter to the study of that setting, its 'factual' dimensions and its fictional implications. Written by a man who was an experimenter both with language and with the possible structures of fictional reality, Faulkner's works do not, like those of Henry James, present the reader with a linear pattern of increasing refinement and complexity. The second chapter on Faulkner is devoted to works in which private worlds of certain characters play an unusually significant part but, even in these works, the fusion which their author effects between public and private worlds is inescapable. He creates his fictional realities according to historical and psychological patterns which owe nothing to the arbitrary, chronological divisions so basic to actual worlds.

The historical and psychological patterns are inextricably interwoven. Even in the map which he drew of the county⁽¹⁾ (see over), Faulkner

(1) The map is from the Modern Library edition of Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Random House, 1951).



ISSETIBBEHA'S

FOAM CAMP
WHERE WASH JONES
KILLED SUPPEN, LATER
BOUGHT AND RESTORED BY MAJOR CASSIUS DE SANEH

CHICKASAW

GRANT

JOHN SARTORIS' RAILROAD

TO MEMPHIS JUNCTION

MCCALLUM'S, WHERE YOUNG
DAYARD SARTORIS
WENT WHEN HIS
GRANDFATHER'S
HEART FAILED IN
THE CAR WRECK

SUPPEN'S
NUMBERED,
12 MI.

SARTORIS PLANTATION
E. 6 MI., 4 MI.

CHURCH WHICH THOMAS
SUPPEN RODE PAST TO

WHERE OLD DAYARD SARTORIS DIED IN YOUNG DAYARD'S CAR

EVERETT HIGHTOWER'S
WHERE CHRISTMAS WAS
KILLED

JOHN SARTORIS' STORE & OFFICE, WHERE HE CAN WATCH HIS
RAILROAD, AND
CERTAINLY WHERE THEY
BODIED ADDIE BUNDREN AT
LAST.

MISS JOHNA BURDICK'S, WHERE CHRISTMAS KILLED
MISS BURDICK, & WHERE LEWA GROVE'S CHILD WAS
BORN

HOLSTON HOUSE

BELLE MITCHELL'S

BANBOW'S

JAIL WHERE GOODWIN WAS LYNCHED

COURTHOUSE WHERE TOMAS DRAKE TESTIFIED, & CONFEDERATE
AND MANUFACTURE WHICH BONDY HAD TO PASS ON HIS LEFT
SIDE.

COMPSON'S, WHERE THEY SOLD
THE STORE TO THE GOLF CLUB
SO QUENTIN COULD GO TO HARVARD.

SANMILL WHERE BYRON
BUNCH FIRST SAW LEWA
GROVE

OLD DAYARD SARTORIS' BANK,
WHICH BYRON SMOOKS ROBBED,
WHICH FLEM SHOPE'S LATER
BECAME PRESIDENT OF

MISS ROSA COLDFIELD'S

TO MORTTOWN
WHERE JASON COMPSON
LOST HIS NECK'S TRAIL,
AND WHERE ANSE BUNDREN
AND HIS BAYS HAD TO GO
IN ORDER TO REACH JERKERSON

PINE
HILLS

JEFFERSON,
YOKNAPATAWPHA CO.,
MISSISSIPPI

AREA, 2,400 SQ. MI.
POPULATION, WHITES 6298
NEGROES 9313

WILLIAM FAULKNER,
SOLE OWNER & PROPRIETOR

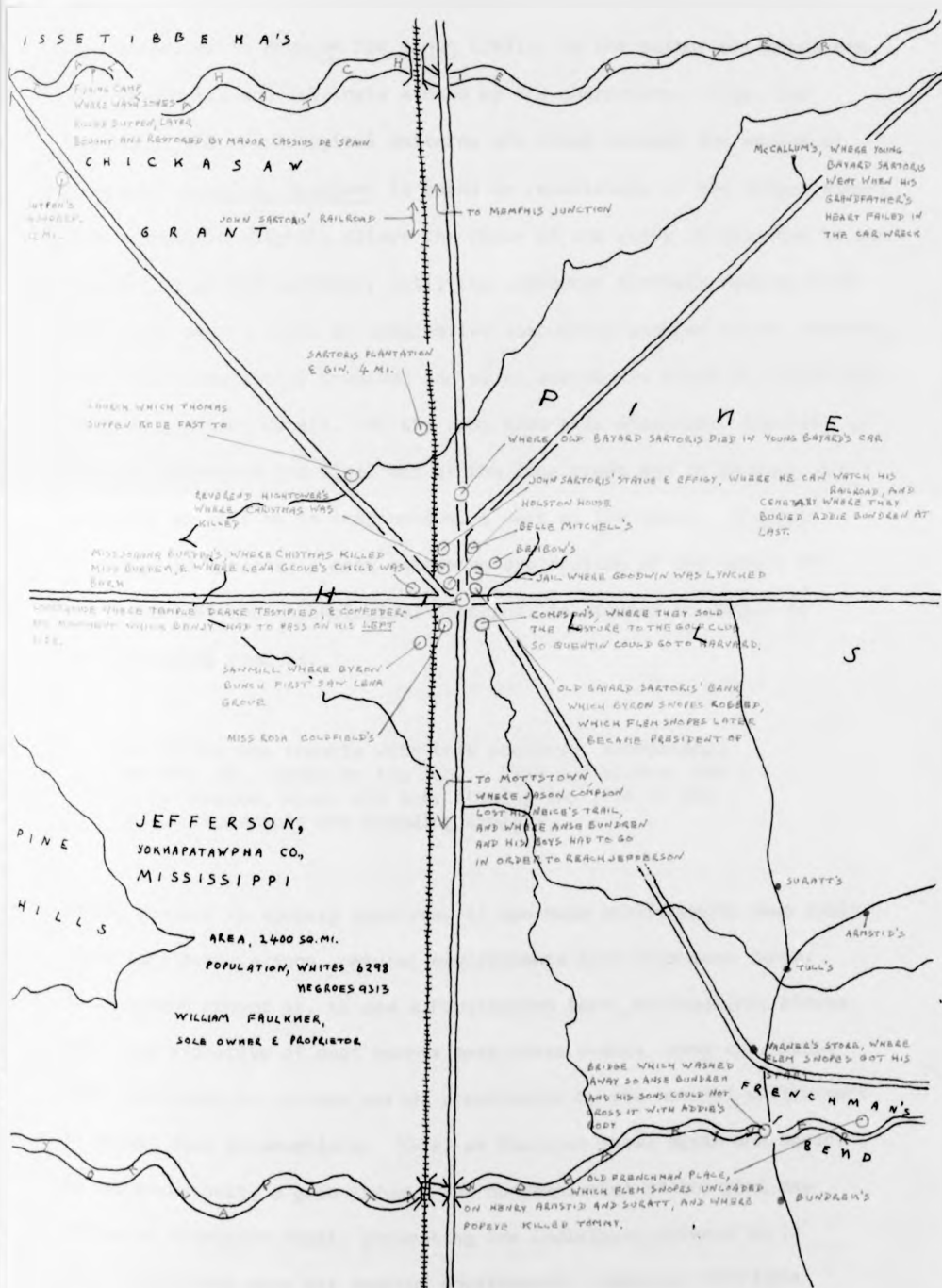
SUATT'S
ARNSTED'S
TULL'S

BRIDGE WHICH WASHED
AWAY SO ANSE BUNDREN
AND HIS SONS COULD NOT
CROSS IT WITH ADDIE'S
BODY

MARNER'S STORE, WHERE
FLEM SHOPE'S GOT HIS
FRENCHMAN'S
BEND

OLD FRENCHMAN PLACE,
WHICH FLEM SHOPE UNLOADED
ON HENRY ARNSTED AND SUATT, AND WHERE
POPEYO KILLED GOMAY.

BUNDREN'S



marks places in terms of the incidents occurring there. Place is never divorced from its attendant associations, associations which may be delineated, as in Requiem For A Nun (1951), by the author but which are more frequently and tellingly evoked by the characters. Thus, the historical and psychological patterns are fused through the medium of language. Absalom, Absalom! is based on repetitions of the Sutpen story; each repetition slightly alters the focus of the story in response to the sensibility of the narrator, until the character furthest removed from the actual events makes an imaginative leap which enables him to identify with those immediately involved and so to assume the right to render the story in greatest detail. At the same time this character, Quentin Compson, witnesses the final act of the long drama and so becomes, in actuality as well as in imagination, a part of the story. Absalom, Absalom!, as Faulkner's most extensive exploration of the nature of the historical and psychological patterns, is studied in detail in the succeeding chapter.

That's the one trouble with this country: everything, weather, all, hangs on too long. Like our rivers, our land: opaque, slow, violent, shaping the life of man in its implacable and brooding image.³

As Doc Peabody so acutely observes, if man-made environments have their historical associations, natural environments also have some force. Their common ground is, to use a Faulknerian term, attenuation; places which are evocative of past events make those events 'hang on', renew their existence in private worlds predisposed by the natural environment to accept such attenuations. This, as Faulkner shows again and again, is not necessarily a good thing. The contemplation of the past may become an obsessive habit, preventing the individual private world from interacting with his ongoing environment. Quentin, Miss Rosa

Coldfield and the Reverend Hightower are but three examples of characters transfixed by the past. Just how it distorts their individual private world is discussed in the next chapter. Elsewhere, nature is seen as a beneficent force, sustaining and complementing the quiescent mood of the opening sections in Light in August (1932), providing succour, in the shape of flowers and trees, for the idiot Benjy and forcing man to extend himself in Go Down, Moses (1942).

The figures who inhabit this landscape and who are, according to the terms of our dichotomy, also a part of the public world, are credited with what might be called a 'communal consciousness'. This entails something more than the awareness of moral and social codes. Shaped by the same natural environment, sharing a historical past and with an inborn appreciation of social order, the natives of Yoknapatawpha are more closely bound together than, for example, the inhabitants of Mrs Wharton's New York. The social structure may be hierarchic, but the divisions do not entail any diminution of human status for those at the lower end. Pride, dignity and social grace are, as the scene in Sartoris shows, ⁽¹⁾ as much the prerogative of the impoverished McCallums as they are of the Sartorises. In Faulkner's vision of it, the society operates according to values more deep-rooted and meaningful than money or manners, although the last are, of course, an outward sign of the individual's appreciation of the values. Naturally, the interaction between communal consciousness and individual private world produces a variety of results but, as we shall see, the shaping influence of the

(1) Attempting to escape the guilt he feels for having caused his grandfather's heart-attack, young Bayard Sartoris retreats to the backwoods. In the house of the McCallums he is located not as a superior but as a fellow huntsman.

public world cannot be ignored. It, like Faulkner's vision of the society, is complex and profound, more evident in the enclosed space of Jefferson than in the backwoods, more refined in the Compsons and Sartoris than in the Varners and the Armstids but indisputably present in all cases.

The history of the mythical Yoknapatawpha County does not emerge from Faulkner's novels in chronological order. As befits a man who views time as a 'fluid condition', he gives it to his readers in fragments, which may, with some effort, be rearranged into a coherent, chronological whole. Our concern, having noted the salience of the historical/psychological pattern and the existence of the communal consciousness, is to examine the portrayal of the county in more detail and to consider the intention informing the design. In this context, the phrase 'overall fictional reality' may be expanded to refer not merely to the illusion created within a single work but to the illusion born of all the novels dealing with Yoknapatawpha. Of these there are fourteen, Sartoris (1929), The Sound and the Fury, (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1936), The Unvanquished (1938), The Wild Palms (1939), The Hamlet (1940), Intruder in the Dust (1948), Requiem For A Nun (1951), The Town (1957), and The Mansion (1959). To these one must add a number of short stories and Go Down, Moses (1942), a combination of both forms. It is possible to discuss these works under a variety of thematic headings; one may trace the history of the Compsons, the Sartoris, the McCaslins, the Snopes or the farmers of Frenchman's Bend; or one may consider them from the point of view of the Negroes, the planters and their families, the townspeople of Jefferson or the poorer white group. To do this is, however, merely to rearrange the

fragments given us by the author and to make no attempt to explore his vision of the public world as a whole. Because this vision was sustained in a unique fashion through novels written over a period of thirty years, the attempt to encompass the panorama, although a difficult and delicate undertaking, is worthwhile.

The historical and psychological patterns are inseparable and must, therefore, be discussed together. In an effort to gain an overview of Faulkner's public world one must take into account the map he drew of the county, the force he attributes to the wilderness and to natural objects, the historical and psychological significance he attributes to man-made structures, the importance which characters attach to 'public' events, the verbal tradition which is seen to be so essential to the establishment and continuance of the 'communal consciousness', the language which Faulkner deploys to portray all these things, the internal structures of the fictional reality in his various novels and the social groupings into which he divides his world. Discussion will proceed in the above order, in the hope that by avoiding strict historical or chronological rearrangement one may come closer to Faulkner's own vision of his microcosm.

Most of the salient physical features of Faulkner's public world may be seen on the map reproduced above. It is a tribute to the thoroughness or complexity of his overall design that most critical texts are accompanied by genealogies, chronologies and other assorted diagrams to facilitate the reader's understanding of the county and its history. The danger is, of course, that such aids may well lead one to confuse fact with fiction, that one may begin to discuss the works in sociological rather than literary-critical terms. Such 'confusion' as Faulkner creates as to the 'facts' in his fictions is quite deliberate.

His intention is not that we should comprehend the 'facts' but that we should respond to the complexities underlying the relationship of characters to environment. As Chick Mallinson says, in Intruder in the Dust, the inhabitants of Yoknapatawpha are of 'a specific kind and even race':

...the dirt, the earth which had bred his bones and those of his father for six generations was shaping him into not just a man but a specific man, not with just a man's passions and aspirations and beliefs but the specific passions and hopes and convictions and ways of acting and thinking of a specific kind and even race...⁴

Thus, in the map, the annotations are of more importance than the lines indicating roads, etc. As has been said, place is always seen in terms of the incidents which give it a position on the historical pattern and that pattern, in turn, shapes the consciousness of those such as Chick. It is significant that the map should not include Beat Four. It's occupants, the Gowries and the Wormitts, are thus put literally as well as metaphorically beyond the pale; their place in Yoknapatawpha is that of the outsider who operates according to his own moral and social codes and whose presence, like the presence of the incomer in the campus novel, serves to highlight the modes of the extant public world. This point is discussed at length in the following chapter.

Initially, of course, all men are intruders in the dust of this land. In Go Down, Moses, Faulkner makes man's relationship to the land a central issue. Beginning in 1877 with Ike McCaslin's initiation into the ways of the wild, the book explores the virtues inherent in both nature and the man willing to challenge it. Sam Fathers, son of an Indian chief and a part-white Negro, takes charge of Ike's ritual initiation, smearing him with the blood of a deer as a token of his

newly achieved manhood. Fathers' wisdom is directly traceable to his Indian forebearers; he speaks of 'the People', of Issetibbeha, his grand-uncle, who sold the land to Carothers McCaslin, and opens Ike's eyes to a moral code whose base is the belief that the wilderness is "of the men, not white nor black nor red, but men, hunters, with the will and the hardihood to endure, the humility and skill to survive".⁵ Hardihood, endurance and humility are cardinal virtues. With courage, pride and honour, they emerge from many of Faulkner's novels as the hallmarks of worthwhile private worlds and it is fitting, in terms of the structure of his overall fictional reality, that they should be implicit in the first attacks on the wilderness. The 'big woods' can dwarf man into 'an almost ridiculous diminishment' and the attempt to civilise the country is seen as 'puny clawing' at their edges. Only the virtues inherent in the attempt, the heroism of the men who oppose nature, can justify and elevate it to the plane of noble undertaking.

Taken together, the stories 'The Bear' and 'Delta Autumn' trace the face of the wilderness and the fate of Ike McCaslin who learned his moral beliefs in grappling with it. From being a mere thirty miles away from Jefferson in 1877, by 1941 the wilderness has retreated to two hundred miles distant and the virtues with which it was associated are equally far removed from the centre of civilised life. Believing that no man can 'own' land and appalled by the incest committed by his forebearer, Carothers McCaslin, Ike renounced his heritage only to find, at the end of 'Delta Autumn', that the idealistic gesture was of no avail. Like the original 'evil and unregenerate' possessor of the land, Roth Edmonds has 'got a child' with a Negro girl and then tried to "dismiss her because she was of an inferior race".⁶ Realising that his repudiation of sixty years ago has come to naught, Ike can only give the girl the hunting horn which for him symbolises

the virtues of the wilderness, hoping that the distaff side of the family in the shape of the unborn baby may yet salvage these virtues.

Faulkner's attitude to the coming of civilisation is somewhat ambivalent. The wilderness is a place where natural order reigns supreme and this communicates itself to the men who first venture into it. Whilst it is clear that he deplores the differences born of race, Faulkner does not suggest that all men are equal. Sam Fathers and Boon Hogganbeck have similar mixtures of blood but because Sam is descended from Indian chiefs, his superiority is acknowledged, "That was the way it should have been. Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian, was his huntsman. Boon should have nursed the dogs".⁷ This is a reflection of the natural order. The old two toed bear, impervious to all bullets and the true goal of every hunting expedition, is also an aristocrat. This animal is portrayed in a semi-mystical fashion, not only because its ability to survive has made it a myth in the county, but because it is in a way an emblem for the wilderness. In hunting it the hunters are metaphorically hunting the spirit of the wild; its death at the hands of the child-like and incompetent Boon is swiftly followed by the death of Sam and by the death of the wilderness itself. Ike senses this:

It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just see it too.⁸

The bear, which had moved with the 'speed of a locomotive' through the woods, is replaced by an actual locomotive as the forests are denuded of their trees and Ike is left to devote his life to continuing the traditions he learned in those woods, a futile task. As Faulkner shows in 'Delta Autumn' and in Requiem For A Nun, civilisation cannot comprehend

the values of the wild.

In the latter we are told of the founding and naming of Jefferson:

...the same men met at the project before sunrise on the next day..., looking about them at the meagre huddle of crude cabins set without order and every one a little awry to every other and all dwarfed to doll-houses by the vast gloom of the woods which enclosed them - the tiny clearing clawed punily not even into the flank of the pathless wilderness but into the loin, the groin, the secret parts... - not even speaking for a while yet since each one believed that the thought was solitarily his, until at last one spoke for all and then it was all right since it had taken one conjoined breath to shape the sound... 'By God. Jefferson'.⁹

This 'conjoined breath' is the beginning of the communal consciousness, the first movement in the symphony of historical and psychological themes which may be heard in every book set in the county. Even though this is a beginning of sorts, Faulkner does not fail to remind us of what already exists, the wilderness. The overlay of civilisation, begun here, consists of deeds significant in terms of human fortitude and moral courage and, as civilisation progresses and men become further removed from the truths and traditions of the big woods and the feats of their ancestors, we see them as increasingly weak and doomed. Compson and Sutpen lines come to rest in idiots, that of the Sartoris in women and reckless self-destruction, and the field is left clear for the advent of the Snopes, those incomers adept at petty chicanery and self-seeking. As the physical world becomes dominated by man-made things, so man is diminished, no longer required to extend himself in opposing forces greater than himself.

The moment described above is, however, a moment of hope, with the town named not after Thomas Jefferson, President, but after Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew, postman, "the incorrigibly kinless and tieless".¹⁰ This,

coupled with the fact that impetus for formally founding the town comes from the breaching of the lean-to shed hitherto used as a jail, might suggest that, in this late novel, Faulkner is parodying the myths he set up in earlier works. Indeed, Requiem For A Nun is a feverish incantation of the history of Yoknapatawpha, replete with images used in other works, the whole being put in the context of Temple Drake's moral degradation. But the manner in which the tale of Yoknapatawpha is re-told does not warrant the name parody, although Faulkner is very much alive to the humorous possibilities of having characters perform in all seriousness deeds which, to the onlooker, are comic. In the above quotation, he allows us to see how small the men are when compared to the encroaching wilderness, but the smallness is a matter of visual perspective, not of moral worth.

The jail and the courthouse are the first buildings to be constructed by common consent for a common purpose and they survive the passage of time to become a record of the changing history and consciousness:

And so, being older than all it (the jail) had seen all: the mutation and the change, in that sense, had recorded them (indeed, as Gavin Stevens...was wont to say, if you would peruse in unbroken - eye, in overlapping - continuity the history of the community, look not in the church registers and courthouse records, but beneath the successive layers of calsumine and creosote and white-wash on the walls of the jail...ll

Faulkner endorses Stevens' conceit. In that part of Requiem entitled 'The Jail', we are given the entire history of the town, from earliest beginnings to what is, implicitly, post-Second World War degradation. What the jail records is not merely the change from halting-post to town, but the:

...shapes and motions, the gestures of passion and hope and endurance, of the men and women and children in their successive overlapping generations long after the subjects which had reflected the images were vanished and replaced.¹²

The repetition of 'successive' and 'overlapping' is not accidental. The pattern of the lives and the layers of paint are closely linked, so closely that one might say that physical things are credited with a species of consciousness. The ledger, in 'The Bear', contains 'the whole land in miniature', each entry signifying more than the mere fact of a purchase of oil or whatever. Faulkner's view of history is not like that described in Mr Sammler's Planet, "If you had the comparative or historical outlook you would want only the most noteworthy, smashing instances. When you had those you could drop, junk and forget the rest, which were only a burden or excess baggage".¹³ His approach allows him to make the 'excess baggage', the trivia, a meaningful mirror of other, larger patterns. Thus, in Requiem, even the dust is seen to contain in suspension the prints of the past. The story of the town is told again from the point of view of those prints, from the 'moccasins and deer-hide sandals' worn by the first white men to dispossess the Indians, through the 'fitted shoes' brought from the East by Doc Habersham and Louis Grenier and the cavalry boots of the Civil War heroes to the all-obliterating prints of "a heavy leather heel engaged not in the traffic of hardihood and endurance and survival, but in money".¹⁴ This last, the imprinting of the man-made on the natural, is analogous to the establishment of civilisation in the wilderness; all the patterns are concentric.

Faulkner regrets the passing of the old South. Requiem For A Nun leaves one in no doubt as to the author's attitude to the supplanting of the last of the forest trees with 'synthetic shrubs'. The 1950 inhabitants

of Jefferson are portrayed as living in "the shadowless fluorescent corpse-glare",¹⁵ ignorant of history, lacking the imaginative power to "burn away the rubble-dross of fact and probability, leaving only truth and dream".¹⁶ Cleanth Brooks says that the structure of this book "constitutes perhaps one of the most daring but perhaps the least successful solutions of structural problems".¹⁷ Certainly, the elaborate evocations of Yoknapatawpha history alternate with scenes from a play whose thin dialogue and whole artificial, disembodied air are meant to underline Faulkner's feelings about the modern world. Temple and Gowan's own past history (the subject of Sanctuary) is full of gothic horror, but it bears all the signs of a breakdown of standards. There is nothing of hardihood or endurance in their tale nor in its after-effects. Only Nancy, the Negro maid standing trial for the murder of their child, shows any awareness of 'truth and dream'. Her faith is deeply rooted and her action moral according to criteria deeper and more humane than those of which the law takes account.

If modernity is a malignant force, driving the individual even further from contact with the universal truths implicit in the wilderness and participation in the communal consciousness which comprehends the history of the county, it is also a part of the historical/psychological pattern. One may trace its development from the post-Civil War period, the time when contemplation replaced action and the verbal tradition came into its own. This tradition gradually breaks down as people from the country are exposed to experiences outwith the scope of the limited community of Yoknapatawpha. Young Bayard Sartoris's recklessness ante-dates his Great War experience; Quentin Compson's crisis takes place in the alien setting of Harvard. Before going there, he was immersed in his environment, finding in it a force capable of shape and meaning:

It (the story of Sutpen) was a part of his twenty years' heritage of breathing the same air which the man himself had breathed between that September afternoon in 1909 and that Sunday morning in June 1833 when he first rode into town out of no discernible past... . Quentin had grown up with that; the mere names were interchangeable and almost myriad. His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth.¹⁸

Just as the earth contains the vestiges of the events which have occurred on it, "it was more than Sartoris earth; it was Vicksburg too: the yelling was in it, the embattled, the iron-worn, the supremely invincible",¹⁹ so the individual in tune with his public world contains the past of that world. The above, from Absalom, Absalom!, is perhaps the most succinct authorial expression of the fusion between public and private worlds to be found anywhere in Faulkner. Mr Compson, responsible for passing on a great deal of the history to Quentin, talks of 'having a few old mouth-to-mouth tales', together with letters and uniforms, which act as catalysts in the reincarnation of the past, "we dimly see people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions".²⁰ Both men are guilty of displacing experience, dwelling on the past to the detriment of the present. They live vicariously on the heroism of those who once defended the South and all that it stood for. Quentin's problems in The Sound and the Fury (1929) largely stem from his feeling that the standards of his family have dropped far below the level suggested by these tales.

Hightower, in Light in August, has a similar relation to history. He thinks "as though the seeds his grandfather had transmitted to him had been on the horse too that night and had been killed too and time had stopped there".²¹ Absolutely static in his contemplation of the past, he imbues it with the life which ought to belong to his present and relates to it even more directly than Mr Compson. Exhuming an old

Civil War uniform from a trunk, he feels that "the cloth itself had assumed the properties of those phantoms who loomed heroic and tremendous against a background of thunder and smoke and torn flags".²² His is a special case. He comes to Jefferson to get nearer his apocalyptic moment; the death of his grandfather is remembered by him alone, it is not a part of the town's lore and does not become so, save as a peripheral aspect of the myths woven round the grandson. Hightower effectively inverts the historical pattern, making the later not the earlier generation the force which compels the attention of the town.

Although the private world may act as a catalyst in the resurrection of the past and may even re-shape it according to some design of its own, that new design is itself bound up with the communal consciousness in two ways. Firstly, for the sake of consistency, it must take into account the extant versions of the story and, secondly, its designer, the private world of the character, is itself dependent for shape on the public world. The tendency to imbue the past with heroic proportions is manifest in numerous works and may be seen as a basic part of the verbal tradition.

...as she grew older the tale itself grew richer and richer...; until what had been a hare-brained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth had become a gallant and finely tragical focal point to which the history of the race had been raised from out the old miasmic swamps of spiritual sloth by two angels valiantly fallen and strayed, altering the course of human events and purging the souls of men.²³

Events do not have to belong to the distant past, to the years of the Civil War, to gain heroic status. The above 'prank' occurred in 1918. It is the teller, the weaver of complex and significant tapestries, who is important, not the event itself. Looking more closely at what

the narrator of the above, Mrs du Pre, makes of her nephews' actions, one can see the influence of the public world. When the field of battle was the South, then individual actions did, in this limited context, have a certain salience for the history of the race. It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that one schooled in tales of that war should ignore the infinitely greater death-toll in this war and should choose to see the action of her family as peculiarly significant, endowing them with the virtues of heroism so often associated with the earlier struggle. In the works of James such distortions of actuality are attributable to the exercise of the private world of a character, the active, idiosyncratic interpretation of the public world. But in the works of Faulkner such distortions may be attributed to the public as much as to the private world, because the distortions all bear the same stamp and emphasise the same aspects or virtues. History, likened in Absalom, Absalom! to the ripples in a pond, needs someone to cast the original stone, to commemorate the event so that, by natural progression, it may become part of "the town's composite heritage of remembering that long back, told, repeated, bequeathed to him (the inhabitant) by his father".²⁴ The little boys who, in The Sound and the Fury, make of "unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact",²⁵ illustrate in a simple way this framework so fundamental to the structure of Faulkner's fictional reality. Where Jamesian characters have the ability and the right to impose their own definitions on a variety of microcosms, Faulknerian characters can exercise little freedom in face of their wider, common microcosm. Their individuality is marked only by their choice of obsession, which of the many given facets of the public world they choose to give priority.

This tendency to turn inwards, coupled with the tendency to respond to the physical world in an effective, subjective way, may remind us of the Barthian or Nabokovian protagonist, but there is an important difference. The latter turn inward in face of a public world which is too vast or too complex for them either to cope with or to affect; it is an intellectual retreat into a separate sphere. Even that great realist, Mr Sammler, is "accustomed to put his own very different emphasis on things"²⁶ and so to come up with a unique vision of the world. Turning inwards, for the Faulknerian character, is no escape. His private world is inextricably bound up with his public world and that public world is not too unmanageably complex but, often, all too painfully present in its every aspect. Translation into the verbal tradition entails a measure of simplification, for the saliences are predetermined. The emphasis is ever on the larger-than-life heroics and those such as Quentin fail to see that the traditions which they so revere have been elevated to unattainable heights by the repetitions of the 'mouth-to-mouth tales'. Having been brought up in the verbal tradition, he cannot allow for the distortions inherent in what he accepts as truth. It takes Shreve, his Canadian roommate at Harvard, to question the nature of the hubris:

We don't live among defeated grandfathers and freed slaves...
to be always reminding us never to forget. What is it?
something you live and breathe like air? a kind of vacuum
filled with wrathlike and indomitable anger and pride and
glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty
years ago?²⁷

It is, of course, amongst the descendants of the heroes that their memory is most celebrated. But Faulkner is aware of more than the tragic and self-defeating facets of this involvement with the past and the aggrandisement of events. In The Hamlet (1940), Ratliff,

sewing-machine salesman and tale-teller extraordinary, mimics the verbal tradition by inverting it. He delights in making the unworthy Snopes the focus for his exaggerations, weaving legends around the man which are full of prodigious feats of nastiness. Stevens and Ratliff both attempt to repel the invading Snopes, those harbingers of self-seeking modernity, and their efforts are themselves a parody of the campaigns waged in the Civil War to defend the Southern way of life. They too are doomed to fail and the story of Flem Snopes' rise from poor sharecropper's son to vice-President of the bank is, as Cleanth Brooks points out, 'a sardonic Horatio Alger story'.

To return to the verbal tradition, Faulkner denotes the empathy of the inhabitants of his close-knit world through the medium of language. Characters have a consonance of vocabulary and tone which implies their shared consciousness. When it is necessary to his artistic purpose that individual voices be distinguishable, then Faulkner proves himself to be a master in the use of the colloquial, as in As I Lay Dying (1930), the insane, as in Benjy's portion of The Sound and the Fury, or whatever other variation on the theme of language is best suited to his purpose. The vast, repetitious sentences which are the hallmark of his prose may be linked with the verbal tradition. Without resorting to specific examples, a procedure which would reveal some unjustifiable longwindednesses, it is fair to say that his language is the key to the underlying pattern of historical and psychological responses. It echoes, in its oxymorons and multiple choices of words, the verbal tradition and its many approximations to 'the truth and the dream' and its successive re-evocations. Not only in individual novels but in the context of his works as a whole, certain phrases and images recur with the cumulative effect of becoming a species of code. Their brevity belies their import, they depend less on their immediate context

and more on the psychological and historical saliences which Faulkner establishes in a single work and continues thereafter. Such images are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Having, as he himself noted on his map of the county, set himself up as 'sole proprietor and owner' of his public world, Faulkner exploits the consequent freedom of invention to the full. Within the physical dimensions he describes psychological dimensions, fusing the two through language. His actual control of his public world allows him to disregard any definition of verisimilitude other than his own and enables him to indulge in artistic experiments, both linguistic and structural. Language is discussed at length in the following chapter, in relation to specific texts. Structurally, the fictional reality of each novel has an experimental element. The design of Requiem has already been described. In The Wild Palms (1939) two completely different stories alternate through the book, their connection never being made explicit, save that one concerns the search for freedom and the other a striving after captivity. The Sound and the Fury depends on four voices weaving their different interpretations around a central event; The Town (1957) has three narrators telling an ongoing tale, correcting and modifying each others' viewpoints both verbally, as they interact in the story, and through the medium of their written records; Absalom, Absalom! is a complex chorus of voices which tell and re-tell the same story with constant changes of focus, whilst As I Lay Dying consists of a number of 'voices' reacting to ongoing events. Hence, one cannot look to Faulkner in hopes of finding a linear development of technique. Each experiment must be judged as a whole but his artistic innovations complement each other. The focal points in one novel may be mentioned in passing in another. Sutpen, cynosure of the incredibly complex Absalom, Absalom! is dismissed, in The Unvanquished

(1938), as "underbred, a cold ruthless man who had come to the county thirty years before the war, nobody knew from where except that Father said you could look at him and know he would not dare to tell";²⁹ in Requiem his story is put even more succinctly, "a tragedy had happened to Sutpen and his pride - not a failure of his pride nor even of his own bones and flesh, but of the lesser bones and flesh which he had believed capable of supporting the edifice of his dream".³⁰

Figures and their stories occur and recur. Bayard Sartoris, the old man in Sartoris is the youthful narrator of The Unvanquished whose death appears, along with almost every other story ever told in the county, in the annals of Requiem. The after-effects of the events recounted in Sanctuary become the play in the latter book, and so on. Gavin Stevens makes an important contribution to Light in August and to Intruder in the Dust, comes to the fore as a character in The Hamlet, where he is a youthful romantic, and in The Town (1957) is treated as a pleasant but old-fashioned figure by his nephew, Charles Mallinson, now a Harvard graduate himself and ready to take over the role of commentator from his uncle. This cross-referencing and natural progression from generation to generation is proof that Faulkner was not without his own sort of 'social realism'. His regret at the passing of the old Jefferson, so evident in Requiem, may in part be seen as a rueful acknowledgement that the period in which fiction could encompass large-scale yet closely interrelated communities and still maintain a semblance of realism was past.

So far the communal consciousness and the historical/psychological dimensions have been discussed in relation to those at the upper end of the social scale. The descendants of the 'heroes' are, naturally, more aware of their history; each family of planters or wealthy towns-

people has a story unique to them, just as each is in some way impeded by the awareness of that story, of the standards it sets for bravery, morality and endurance, all raised by hindsight to an unattainable height. But those lower down the scale also partake of the communal consciousness. In his book William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country, Cleanth Brooks goes to great pains to make clear the distinctions between yeoman and tenant farmers:

Though the planters of the Old South and the Negroes play a very important part in Faulkner's novels, the folk who dominate much of his fiction...are white people, many of them poor, most of them living on farms; but they are not to be put down necessarily as 'poor whites' and certainly not necessarily as 'white trash'.³¹

As was said at the outset to this chapter, a lower place on the social scale does not entail any diminution of human value. The Tulls, the Armstids and the Varners all show, in their reactions to the Bundrens' escapade and to the pregnant Lena Grove, that they have both humour and the ability to make aesthetic and moral discriminations without loss of humanity. All are appalled by the stench of Addie's corpse, all suspect that Lena is unmarried, yet none fail to assist. Their direct involvement with the practical necessities of day to day life and the fact that none of them has ever had slaves and so they have lost nothing in the Civil War, means that their relationship to the history of the county is somewhat different. But, as Faulkner shows, history need not consist in great deeds; so long as an event has made sufficient impression on someone to merit commemoration in the form of a re-telling of the tale, then that is sufficient. Thus, the difference between the planters and the poor white people is not one of kind but of degree, the degree being dictated by the characters' social and environmental experience. Cora Tull, in As I Lay Dying, interprets

the Bundrens according to standards as remote from her actual experience as those which so obsess Quentin. It matters little that the source of Cora's language is orthodox religion and that of Quentin's is family history; in both cases the public world exerts the same influence on the private world, cushioning it from contact with 'reality'. So long as people belong to or are in sympathy with Yoknapatawpha, they partake of the communal consciousness. The advent of the self-seeking Snopes throws the nature of this consciousness into high relief. It is parochial and even naïve, but it is preferable to Snopesian opportunism. Ratliff, who makes the Snopes part of the lore of the place, must bear some responsibility for their increasing hold on the county. In translating them into terms the public world can understand, exaggerating their faults to the point where they seem demoniac, he prevents people from realising the real threat which the Snopes pose to the extant way of life. The Snopes' horses are discussed in the following chapter as wild, untameable variations on a familiar theme.

Apart from the Snopes, other groups who might be considered as standing in a slightly different relationship to the public world, namely Negroes and women, have an identity given to them by that public world to which they respond and conform. Women, particularly the spinsters or childless widows with no stake in the future, are oriented towards the past and play a vital role in furthering the verbal tradition. The 'towns' composite heritage' is best communicated to the inhabitant by:

...his mother: from her mother: or better still, to him when he himself was a child, direct from his great-aunt: the spinster, maiden and childless out of a time when there were too many women because too many of the young men were maimed or dead: the indomitable and undefeated maiden progenitresses of spinster and childless descendants still capable of rising up and stalking out in the middle of 'Gone With the Wind',³²

Mrs Virginia du Pre is the archetype of this species; it is she who stalks out of the gross misrepresentation of Southern womanhood and she who finally fits the story of her nephews into the glorious tradition. She, together with Granny in The Unvanquished, Miss Habersham in Intruder in the Dust and Rosa Coldfield in Absalom, Absalom!, is undefeated. Faulkner seems to imply that the men who went to war and experienced the actual defeat were somehow emasculated and passed this emasculation on to their descendants. Men are frequently pictured as sitting passively reliving the glorious past whilst the women take decisive action, digging up corpses, visiting deserted houses or organising mule thefts. It is they who bring vitality to the verbal tradition and to the actual world. Mr Compson is wrong in saying that women were made into ghosts by the defeat of the South. Aunt Jenny, with her taste for lurid newspapers and her acid tongue, "the war just gave John a good excuse for getting himself killed",³³ is no ghost. Her abrasiveness and cynicism about the men who surround her is not at odds with her glorification of the past. She is merely trying to counter the pressure of that past in some active, albeit negative way. Proof that she too holds the traditions of the family dear comes with her reaction to her brother's heart-attack:

Miss Jenny felt that old Bayard had somehow flouted them all, had committed lese majesty towards his ancestors and the lusty glamour of the family doom by dying, as she put it, practically from the 'inside out'.³⁴

Addie Bundren, carrying the burden of her inactive husband and shaping the private worlds of her children according to her own obtuse design, is no less worthy of a place in this tradition. It is she who holds the family together, substituting, in accordance with the family's inarticulate tradition, hard work for more abstract adhesives, main-

taining cleanliness as the counterpart of morality and attempting, in her own way, to compensate for the ineffectual Anse.

Younger women are almost invariably portrayed as corrupt or corrupting. Caddy Compson, who blames her promiscuity on 'something terrible' in her which grinned at her through the faces of her lovers, Dewey Dell who in her innocence sins because the bag of cotton was full when she and Lefe reached the end of the row, Temple Drake who is not totally averse to the perverted ministrations of Popeye and Miss Bundren, who drives Joe Christmas to excesses which even he finds distasteful, all confirm Quentin's assertion that women have an affinity with evil. It is no accident that their willingness to submit to outsiders coincides with the 'rape' of the public world by incomers. The decay of the public world is imagined in as complex and as thorough detail as its growth. One is left to question whether it is the passing of the South as a distinct, cultural entity which Faulkner mourns, or whether his obvious distaste for the modern is based on its lack of themes commensurate with his artistic powers.

The other group which is given a specific role by the public world is that of the Negroes. Faulkner accepts the conventions of the role of the Negro in the South only at a superficial, sociological level. He does not deny them links with the 'truth and the dream', in fact in many novels he seems to suggest that the adversity of their social position calls forth qualities similar to those evoked by the confrontation of the white man and the wilderness. It is often the lot of the Negro character to make the tersest and truest comment on any given situation. Although his fate may largely depend on that of his white masters, he is in the position to face 'reality' more directly, without the distorting pressure of family history. In The Sound and

the Fury the final section is devoted to the reactions of Dilsey; but it is spoken by the author, so we cannot penetrate the depths of her private world, only endorse her conclusions that what she is witnessing is 'the end' for the family. Even in Go Down, Moses, the book which deals most extensively with the Negro state of being, one feels that Faulkner does not wish to define that state so precisely as he does that of the white characters. The psychological dimensions of the Negro remain, like his social standing, overshadowed by the predominant whites.

Light in August shows that Faulkner is interested in the historical and psychological components of 'niggerhood', but Christmas reaches no conclusions and finds he cannot penetrate beneath the surface of either white or black states of being. He is restricted to the more overt manifestations of the difference, such as the spacing of the white houses and the crowding together of the black cabins. From the white point of view, Negro blood is a stain; it lies at the root of the first failure of Sutpen's grand plan and is a source of anguish to Christmas. Charles Bon's son chooses the blackest possible of wives, perhaps to reinforce the Negro in his own blood or, perhaps, as a defiant gesture toward Judith and Clytie who, from the start, stripped him of the white identity and the fancy clothes given him by his mother and forced him into the denim of the Negro. We are not given sufficient insight into his private world to judge his motives. Christmas's crisis hinges on whether or not this definition applies to him, whilst Lucas Beauchamp is despised by the public world because he refuses to behave as the colour of skin demands he should. He chooses instead to assert his individuality and his white blood and the events in Intruder in the Dust occur only because Chick Mallinson cannot bear to feel that he is indebted to a Negro. In Go Down, Moses, we see that Lucas is an

individual who, like old Carothers McCaslin, his forebearer, and Sutpen, lusts for power, who despises Ike for renouncing his heritage, taking it as a sign of weakness, and who is sufficiently self-assertive to accuse Zack Edmonds of cuckolding him.

The 'pure' Negro state of being is never fully explored. Each family of planters has a family of slaves whose genealogies run parallel to their own and, all too frequently, connect through the white male. Judith Sutpen is balanced by Clytie Sutpen, Henry by Charles Bon; Lucas Beauchamp is the great-grandson of Carothers McCaslin, Ike the grandson, and so on. If any portion of the mixture of bloods is condemned, then it is the white. After having been brought up in Lucas's house, accepting him as surrogate father and Molly as mother, Carothers Edmonds suddenly begins to look on them as 'niggers':

Then one day the curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honour but from wrong and shame, descended on him.³⁵

It is the combination of bloods which is most often dealt with in depths, the conjunction of polar opposites in one person. Perhaps out of deference to the actual structure of the South, Faulkner leaves the pure Negro's relationship to the communal consciousness as a matter for conjecture and induction.

There is much such conjecture in Intruder in the Dust. Gavin Stevens maintains that the whole Civil War was fought not in order that the South might keep the Negro in bondage, but so that it could choose to release him in its own time. He admits that the South is guilty of injustice towards the black race but reasons that too hasty a redress of these wrongs would have led to the Negro losing his best qualities,

his 'capacity to endure and wait and survive', and supplanting them with the worst aspects of the white man. Although one feels that, in spite of his PhD from Heidelberg, Steven's intellectuality is sometimes a trifle spurious, Faulkner seems to endorse his analysis. The tide of Negroes in The Unvanquished, wandering en masse to the Jordan or any convenient river, are utterly lost. Only when Granny takes charge of them and returns them to their original places do they recover their identity; until her arrival, the liberators from the North were completely nonplussed, unable to control the flood of humanity they had let loose. Ringo's statement, "they ain't no more niggers in Jefferson nor nowhere else",³⁶ is darkly comic, a comment on the North's misapprehension of what the term nigger implies. It refers not merely to a state of bondage but to a state of being, an integral part of the communal consciousness of the South which, if never fully explored, comes by implication to be associated with sturdy, commonsensical qualities. Caspey's assumption that, "If us cullud folks is good enough ter save France fum de Germans, den us is good enough ter have de same rights as de Germans is",³⁷ may be logical but, even in 1919, is still premature. Caspey returns to a grudging servility under the lash of Miss Jenny's tongue. The fate of the Negro is seen in Requiem. The break-up of rural society has driven him to "New York and Detroit and Chicago and Los Angeles ghettos".³⁸

Thus, Faulkner creates a vast fictional reality, a public world whose dimensions he dictates, of which the internal fictional realities of his various novels are but fragments. Although these fragments are complete in the context of individual works, it is only in trying to make the panoramic sweep that one comes to appreciate in depth the design of each fragment. As we have seen, Faulkner dictates not only the physical dimensions of his world but also its history, its traditions,

its social groupings and, most importantly, its hubris or psychological demeanour. This demeanour is most evident and most complex when it is evinced at the upper levels of the society, but, as subsequent discussion of As I Lay Dying and Light in August shows, it is also apparent in the lives of those lower down the scale. So far the emphasis has been laid on the wider manifestations of Faulkner's vision of his public world. But, because that vision is detailed and extremely thorough, there are many more subtle manifestations which also warrant consideration.

Just as he drew a map of Yoknapatawpha, so Faulkner draws, with the medium of language, the fundamental psychological dimensions of his characters' private worlds. As the former led to the recurrence of certain places, so the latter leads to a recurrence of certain psychologically significant words. A detailed analysis and painstaking word-count of the repetitions may be found in Florence Leaver's essay, 'Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power'.³⁹ Ms Leaver lists "honor, pride, courage, vanity, sacrifice, endurance, destiny, abnegation, outrage, repudiation, humility, despair"⁴⁰ as words associated with the Sartoris-Compson-Snopce myth. One should add that they are also associated with the Sutpen story, with the reactions of the town to Lucas Beauchamp's 'crime', with Joe Christmas in Light in August and with the whole history of the county as told in Requiem. The explanation would be far simpler were their reference restricted to the Sartoris-Compson-Snopce myth. By 'leaving' out the rest, one may glibly relate them to the theme of traditional values at war with modernity which Marion O'Donnell was the first of many to suggest is a basic element in all Faulkner's fiction. Both assumptions are too broad to be really accurate. Honor, etc. may initially be associated with the Sartorises, if only because the first Yoknapatawpha novel dealt with

them. But the words become an intrinsic part of the whole communal consciousness, their repetition pointing at once to the verbal tradition and to the centrality of these attitudes in this world. One must remember that it is not only the Sartoris who grapple with the Snopes; The Hamlet (1940) deals with the efforts of Frenchman's Bend to repel the invaders. Hence, one may argue that there is a community of interest reflected in the application of these words to more than the families of the heroes. As one may see in Go Down, Moses, many of them pre-date the Civil War and their referents are inherent in the first attack on the wilderness.

Of course, one must acknowledge that the frequency of occurrence of certain words is not merely a reflection of the prevalence of certain attitudes to the public world. It is also a sign of the presence of the author. Faulkner's voice, his linguistic interpretation of the historical/psychological pattern, is present in every work. It is not restricted to any definite, narrative thread but infuses the speech of Quentin, Mr Compson, Gavin Stevens and even Ratliff. Quentin recognises that Shreve sounds like his father at the end of Absalom, Absalom! and this is but one instance of the interchangeability of voices. It is a reflection of Faulkner's vision of his public world in terms of a verbal tradition, with its inevitable consonances, and in terms of the deeper levels at which Yoknapatawpha man operates. His concern is not primarily with characters as individuals but with characters as people belonging to a specific, closely-knit public world whose historical/psychological patterns have a profound influence on the individual. On more than one occasion, characters express scant regard for the normal, communicative power of language. According to General Compson it is "that meagre and fragile thread by which the little surface corners of men's secret and solitary lives may be joined

for an instant".⁴¹ Faulkner forces it to do more than join 'little surface corners', often disregarding orthodox linguistic and grammatical structures in order to better attune the words to the deeper levels of consciousness which he wishes to evoke.

Yet, at first glance, both his language and his internal organisation of the novels seem to be working against effective communication of meaning. Why is Benjy's section, the least comprehensible, placed at the start of The Sound and the Fury? Why is the straightforward story of Sanctuary complicated by 'withheld meaning and delayed disclosures'? Why are 'The Old Man' and 'Wild Palms' not two separate novels? In each case the structure of the overall fictional reality radically alters the readers' reactions to the story. Were The Sound and the Fury simply narrated then we might be tempted to accept Jason's version of the story, to dismiss Quentin as effete, Benjy as an idiot and Dilsey as a 'black mammy'. As it stands, the structure effectively shifts our attention from the 'facts' of the story to its emotional implications for those involved. Orthodox descriptive techniques could not have produced the same atmospheric force as those used in Sanctuary, just as the two stories in The Wild Palms, if taken individually, would have lost their conjoint impact. The reader finds himself impelled to alter his perspective on each as they unfold alternately. Thus structure is combined with language in the attempt to highlight the more profound levels of man's relationship to his environment.

Aspects of that environment come to have a special, metaphoric meaning throughout the books, reinforcing the fundamental psychological patterning. Water becomes an analogy for time, both, in the fictional context, are fluid conditions, the latter in so far as characters disregard temporal divisions in their often total immersion in the past. The

vast, featureless expanse of flood-water on which the tall convict is carried in 'The Old Man'⁽¹⁾ is clearly intended to be a metaphoric counterpart of his life. In neither the actual water nor in his life before entering prison was he in control of his destiny. Quentin sees salvation, 'not-being', as he gazes into the river, seeking to drown his shadow in it, whilst Charlotte, in The Wild Palms says she 'loves water', "That is where to die. Not in the hot air".⁴² Both these characters are preoccupied with time as well as with water. Quentin's preoccupation is considered at length in the next chapter.

Faulkner's time conceit also involves many images of static motion. The moments from the past which characters live and re-live are, in a sense, 'frozen'. Doc Peabody's remark about 'things hanging on too long' is most apt for we frequently encounter characters for whom the past has more reality than the present. Old Bayard Sartoris, at the start of Sartoris, is less 'real' than the shade of John Sartoris which he and his companion re-awaken in their talk and Ike, listening to Sam Fathers talk of the Indians is subject to a similar experience, "gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be the old times and would become a part of the boy's present". Quentin, appropriately, thinks of the phenomenon in relation to words, his surrogate for experience:

It (the talking, the telling) seemed to partake of that logic-and-reason-flouting quality of a dream. ...the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity...depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet elapsing time.⁴⁴

(1) There is a hint of almost Nabokovian word-play in the title of this story and the remark made in its companion tale, 'Wild Palms', "Set, ye armoured sons in a sea of hemingwaves" (William Faulkner, The Wild Palms, 3rd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p.89

Noting the subtle delay before 'verisimilitude' and how it implies the slowing of Quentin's own thoughts, we cannot but also remark how apt a description this is of the mechanics of Faulkner's own technique. Dealing in extremes of experience, with obsessive, retarded or unhinged characters, he nevertheless moves his readers to credulity, if only because he forces us into a 'formal recognition' of his complete control over his material and what he wishes us to make of it. Persisting in the face of complications which may often seem unwarranted, the reader at last recognises the underlying patterns, no matter how remote they may be from the mere surfaces of 'realism'.

Even the dust-cloud following the buggy bearing Quentin and Miss Coldfield to Sutpen's Hundreds is suspended in time as well as in air, "immobly upward at perpendicular's absolute in some old dead volcanic water".⁴⁵ It is as if the ride itself were caught, in spite of its recent occurrence, in the 'greek frieze' effect mentioned in As I Lay Dying and elsewhere, Faulkner's variation on Keats' 'grecian urn' image. But there is another effect, also related to static motion but not to crucial historical moments. Just as the communal consciousness is not restricted in its references to great public events, so the imagery used to evoke the public world can comprehend the slightest detail in such a way that it becomes linked with the more historically significant aspects. Hogs, in Intruder in the Dust, are "immobilised by the heels in attitudes of frantic running"⁴⁶ and Loosh, in The Unvanquished, stands "hanging against the lighted doorway like he had been cut out of tin in the act of running".⁴⁷

The historical/psychological pattern is complete, down to the finest detail and slightest oxymoron. Faulkner's public world, truly his own domain, is the skilful creation of an artist for whom 'realism' is

a concept far removed from the pure description of extant public worlds. Occasionally he may abuse the freedom which he has gained for himself by constructing his own dimensions; he may be tendentious, tedious and excessively inscrutable. Such faults, when balanced against the magnitude of his achievement in imaginative, technical and artistic terms, are of no importance. This achievement may be fully appreciated only when this broad survey of his public world is accompanied by a close study of just how the historical/psychological dimensions, the communal consciousness, the imagery, the social groupings, natural and man-made objects and private worlds come together within the pages of some of his most successful works. This is the intention underlying the following chapter.

NOTES

1. William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1936), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p.361
2. Robert Penn Warren, 'William Faulkner', in William Faulkner, Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J Hoffman & Olga Vickery, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1969), p.124
3. William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1930), this ed. The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p.44
4. William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1948), this ed., 5th ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p.146
5. William Faulkner, Go Down, Moses and Other Stories, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1942), this ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), p.135
6. Go Down, Moses, p.210
7. Go Down, Moses, p.157
8. Go Down, Moses, p.160
9. William Faulkner, Requiem For A Nun, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1951), this ed., The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p.35
10. Requiem, p.33
11. Requiem, p.188
12. Requiem, p.188
13. Saul Bellow, Mr Sammler's Planet (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p.62
14. Requiem, p.193
15. Requiem, p.215
16. Requiem, p.230
17. Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p.140
18. Absalom, pp. 11-12
19. William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1938), this ed., 3rd ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p.41

20. Absalom, pp.100-102
21. William Faulkner, Light in August, 1st pub. Smith & Haas (New York, 1932), this ed., 2nd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p.59
22. Light in August, p.443
23. William Faulkner, Sartoris, 1st pub. Harcourt Brace (New York, 1929), this ed., The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus), p.7
24. Requiem, p.225
25. William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1929), this ed., The Collected Works (Chatto & Windus, 1956), p.116
26. Bellow, op.cit., p.66
27. Absalom, p.361
28. Brooks, op.cit., p.173
29. Unvanquished, p.153
30. Requiem, p.209
31. Brooks, op.cit., p.10
32. Requiem, p.225
33. Sartoris, p.262
34. Sartoris, p.262
35. Go Down, Moses, p.83
36. Unvanquished, p.138
37. Sartoris, p.45
38. Requiem, p.216
39. Florence Leaver, 'Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power', in Three Decades, pp.199-209
40. Leaver, op.cit., p.201
41. Absalom, p.251
42. William Faulkner, The Wild Palms, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1939), this ed., 3rd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p.52
43. Go Down, Moses, p.122

44. Absalom, p.22
45. Absalom, p.175
46. Intruder, p.4
47. Unvanquished, p.19

CHAPTER SEVEN

William Faulkner: As I Lay Dying, Light in August,
The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!

The thunder of hooves, that reverberation of the Civil War, is noticeably absent from As I Lay Dying (1930). In this novel Faulkner deals with a group of characters whose physical isolation from other groups in Yoknapatawpha society is reflected in their states of mind. Lacking living links with the past in the shape of grandparents or spinster aunts, not given to speech save when practical necessity demands it, the Bundrens do not partake of the communal consciousness; their microcosm is both physically and psychologically very small. Yet, it is through these characters Faulkner shows that the historical/psychological pattern need not depend for its existence upon large-scale communal experience. In basic design, the private worlds of the Bundrens, especially those of Addie and Darl, are identical to those of the Compsons and Sartoris. The power which Addie Bundren exercises over the psyches of her children is analogous to the power of family history over a Compson or a Sartoris. Analogous but far more potent, for, where the latter depends largely on a verbal tradition, on the many recapitulations intervening between event and response, the force of Addie Bundren is direct, applied over the short span of her children's lifetimes and enforced without any verbal filter. She is the giver of shape and direction, both to the family as a whole and to its individual members, the fount of its traditions and the dictator of its standards.

Of the sixty sections into which the novel is divided, only one is devoted to Addie's thoughts. In this section we discern the theoretical outlines of her philosophy; to see it in action, we must turn to her children, each of whom derives shape from one aspect of the

mother, the aspect most prominent at the moment of his or her birth. To enable himself to explore the profound psychological depths of characters who, if they are to retain their credibility, can never overstep the bounds of their limited powers of articulation, Faulkner conjures with language. Each section is devoted to an individual character, to his spoken words, colloquial, direct and environmentally bound, to his conscious thoughts, again colloquial but tending more to the abstract, and to his unverballed responses and reflections, phrased by the narrator and so freed from the demands of linguistic patterns consistent with social standing and education. Thus Darl, who, even when he speaks, is less colloquial and less tied to the concrete, can reach poetic heights without loss of credibility:

For an instant before the jerk comes onto his arms he sees his whole body earth-free, horizontal, whipping snake-limber, until he finds the horse's nostrils and touches earth again. Then they are rigid, motionless, terrific, the horse back-thrust on stiffened, quivering legs, with lowered head; Jewel with dug heels, ... cursing the horse with obscene ferocity.

They stand in rigid terrific hiatus, the horse trembling and groaning. Then Jewel is on the horse's back. He flows upward in a stooping swirl like the lash of a whip, his body midair shaped to the horse.¹

Darl does not witness the above scene, he merely reconstructs it on the basis of a thorough and perceptive knowledge of those about him, a knowledge which gains credence because such passages merge imperceptibly with the ongoing events. Gradually, the vision of Jewel and the horse is established as a crucial one in Darl's private world and it begins to be printed in italics. In As I Lay Dying Faulkner uses italics to indicate what might be called the 'distilled essence' of characters' thoughts, images and events on which they

.. dwell and which are of great, private significance to them.

Darl is the most complex of the Bundrens, conceived just as his mother had convinced herself that her 'circle', her selfhood, had survived the 'violations' perpetrated by Anse and Cash. He is the inspiration for her revenge on Anse, and its worst victim. Addie chooses to see the shock, which she experiences in moving from the sheltered life of a schoolteacher in Jefferson to the harsh reality of subsistence with an indolent husband, not as a mistake on her part but as the result of the treachery of words. Her experience of love and motherhood lead her to conclude that she has been deceived by words, "That was when I learned that words are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at".² Deeds and words become separate entities:

I would think how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other; and that sin and love and fear are just sounds that people who have never sinned nor loved nor feared have for what they never had and cannot have until they forget the words.³

Darl absorbs this fundamental duality. Highly perceptive and intuitive, he lacks a firm grasp on reality; he cannot make a meaningful connection between the word 'is' and the state of being to which it refers:

And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. ... And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are was, it is not. Yet the wagon is, because when the wagon is was, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel is, so Addie Bundren

must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am is.⁴

This ontological insecurity may be traced directly to his mother. Not only did she not want Darl to be, when he arrived she deprived him of her affection, effectively cutting him off from the stable centre of the family. So he must exist in a sort of limbo, acutely aware of his environment but unable to relate to it as his brothers and sister do.

The simplicity of the language in the above passage, together with the absence of commas in 'dont', suggests that these are logical conscious thoughts. Like Quentin Compson, Darl has a disturbed private world and a public world inhabited by an unmarried sister who is pregnant, a brother who, although not an 'idiot' like Benjy, is a trifle odd and a father who is a mere cypher as far as running the family is concerned. There, however, the resemblances end. Dewey Dell's sexual exploit is known, intuitively, by Darl but it does not disturb him greatly. There is no family honour for him to defend, no suggestion of incestuous love to cause him suffering. Unlike Quentin, he is dissociated from the public world, enrapt in himself alone and uncaring about the others' doings. As Cash says:

I could see all the while how folks could say he was queer, but that was the very reason couldn't nobody hold it personal. It was like he was outside of it too, same as you, and getting mad at it would be kind of like getting mad at a mud-puddle that splashed you when you stepped in it. And then I always has a kind of idea that him and Dewey Dell knowed things betwixt them.⁵

Through this private world Faulkner introduces that perspective on the public world which may, in other novels, be attributed directly to him. Of all the Bundrens, only Darl could credibly sense the crucial relationship between the dimensions of time and space, "We go on with a motion so soporific, so dreamlike as to be uninferent of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing between us and it";⁶ elsewhere he is credited with thinking "as though the space between us were time; an irrevocable quality".⁷ It is he who conceives of the air as 'an impalpable plane' upon which "Shadows formed as upon a wall, as though like sound they had not gone very far away in falling but had merely congealed for a moment".⁸

The imagery used to evoke his unverbaised thoughts marks him as the Faulknerian commentator in the book. Envisaging Jewel and Gillespie as "two figures in a Greek frieze isolated out of all reality by the red glare"⁹ and talking of 'tableau savage', he oversteps the bounds of his possible conscious knowledge. Yet Faulkner succeeds in associating this vocabulary and imagery with the character in such a way that the fact that they could not be modes of expression available to him becomes irrelevant. One can accept that they are, in spite of this incongruity, a telling evocation of the depths of Darl's private world. The freedom which Faulkner won for himself by dictating the dimensions of his public world extends to the private worlds he delineates. One could object that Darl, who is given a set of phrases remarkably akin to those used by Quentin Compson, lacks credibility were it not for the fact that Faulkner so clearly differentiates between the spoken, unspoken and unverbaised languages of his characters. With Darl, he demonstrates conclusively that inability to express certain perceptions does not mean that these

perceptions do not exist. The philosophical and psychological debate about the necessity of language to thought may continue to rage; within a fictional context, Faulkner establishes the existence of thought unallied to language.

How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-band on no-strings: in sunset, we fall into furious attitudes; dead gestures of dolls.¹⁰

Darl's awareness of futility and even of comedy inherent in the situation may not be of any use to him personally but it does serve to stress the element of black humour on the book. His insane laughter at the end of the novel reminds the reader that Faulkner's exploration of the private worlds of the Bundrens has not been absolutely serious. Darl's situation may be seen as tragic. The possessor of an active private world he is put where only passivity and the minimum of thought are required; yet the shock of being parted from the world in which he has no place splits him into two distinct Darls, the one speaking and the other laughing in a grotesque fulfilment of the legacy left him by his mother, the total separation of word and deed.

Comedy resides in the journey itself. Although in its course the Bundrens undergo ordeals by fire and by water, these do not elevate their activities to a heroic plane. Faulkner exploits the disparity between the external appearance of the pilgrimage and the internal motivation. The ordeals are faced and overcome through the determination, though not the active assistance, of Anse. And this determination may be traced not to the fulfilment, against all the odds, of a promise to his dead wife, but to his determination to acquire a pair of store-bought teeth and a replacement for Addie. As the doing, the hardships of the journey,

not least of which is the increasing odour of the corpse, go steadily and determinedly along the earth, the words of the promise go up in a thin, straight line, bearing little relation to the doing, save as a cover for the real motives.

When first introduced to the reader, Darl appears to be a very precise observer, describing his immediate environment in terms of geometrical figures and precise distances, "The path runs straight as a plumb-line, ... to where it turns and circles the cottonhouse at four soft right angles and goes on across the field, worn so by feet in fading precision".¹¹ Later, one sees that this factual observation has hidden meaning. Whilst Darl follows the well-worn path, Jewel walks straight through the cotton-house, although Darl is fifteen feet ahead of Jewel, it is the latter's head which is visible to 'anyone watching us'. Darl's comments are not purely descriptive but imply his jealous dislike of his brother, Addie's favourite. Thus, even what the characters notice about their environment may give significant insight into their private worlds. They themselves are oblivious to this significance.

Like Addie, Jewel is given only one section in the book. Again, this in no way reflects his status within the family, it merely implies that he, like his mother, is a 'private' person, a magnet to the others because he is unfathomable. Darl is especially preoccupied with Jewel, devoting much thought, both conscious and unverballed, to his doings. To Vardaman, the youngest child, Jewel is enclosed in an aura, he and his horse the most exotic things in the environment. Dewey Dell feels that "he is not kin to us in care, not care-kin"¹² and Darl, ever perceptive and spiteful, comes closest to the 'difference' which

all the family sense in Jewel. On more than one occasion, he asks 'who is your father' and, although in the context of 'Jewel's mother is a horse', this may be no more than a metaphorical question, it is uncannily near the truth. From Jewel's own section we gather that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, he is the most devoted to Addie. Later he proves this devotion by saving her body from both fire and water and by selling his dearest possession, the horse, so that they may get her to Jefferson. The stiff, 'cigar-store Indian' face which he presents to the world is a cover for his embittered dislike of all the others and their effects on his mother:

It would just be me and her on a high hill and me rolling the rocks down the hill at their faces, picking them up and throwing them down the hill ¹³ faces and teeth and all by God until she was quiet ...

His 'difference' is a source of strength, with its roots in his mother's state of mind at the time of his conception and birth.

Born ten years after Darl, Jewel is the son of Whitfield, the minister with whom Addie commits adultery, not as a means to getting her own back on Anse but in an attempt to explore the area lying between the word and the deed. There is a profound if perverted logic in her decision to explore the meaning of sin rather than of virtue. Lighting on a man supposedly the incarnation of virtue, "the instrument ordained by God who created the sin, to sanctify that sin He had created",¹⁴ she again shows her tendency to view the world in terms of polarities. Committing the sexual act with Whitfield unites the opposites of sin and virtue:

I would think of sin as a garment which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air.¹⁵

By Addie's reckoning, the conception of Jewel is equivalent to 'cleansing my house', expiating the sexual drive, 'the wild blood', and replacing it with 'milk, warm and calm', a reconciliation with the sorry approximations of words. Hence, Jewel becomes the symbol of her acceptance of the world, of Anse, of words and of death. Having explored sin and found it meaningful, she can then accept that virtue, or not-sin, has some currency and be willing to redress the balance by giving Anse two more children, the innocent Dewey Dell, so reminiscent of Lena Grove in her simple, country-born ways, and Vardaman, whose actions may seem as insane as Darl's but who has not, in fact, been cut off from Addie's affection. In blaming her death on Peabody and getting it mixed up with the killing of the fish, he is merely exhibiting a child's difficulties in coming to terms with the concept of death. Boring augur holes in the lid of the coffin is a natural act for a boy who has experienced claustrophobia, seen rabbits kept in a cupboard die for want of air and fears that his mother may also be suffering.

Addie's private world is the complex centre of the book. She is the omnipotent schoolmarm, shaping the minds of her 'charges' and with an almost academic interest in linguistic form and meaning. Anse is her polar opposite, an insensitive believer in the empty symbols of words, and so she thinks of him as dead, "a significant shape profoundly without life like an empty door frame".¹⁶ Because he is so lacking in being, Addie resents his right to violate her body, "the shape of my body where I used to be a virgin" and I couldn't think

Anse, couldn't remember Anse".¹⁷ Having intercourse with Whitfield gives significance to this shape as well as uniting the word and the deed. Afterwards, she is satisfied:

I did not even ask him for what he could not have given me: not-Anse. That was my duty to him, not to ask that, and that duty I fulfilled. I would be I; I would let him be the shape and echo of his word. That was more than he asked, because he could not have asked that and been Anse, using himself so with a word.¹⁸

Like all the others, Anse fulfils the 'shape' given him by Addie. He uses language to avoid all responsibility and all contact with reality, ever harping on about his misfortunes, waiting passively for others to do his work for him in the firm conviction that his inability to work is yet another of his many trials. Even the environment is seized upon as a factor excusing him from all blame; he reasons that man, being vertical, is intended to be static and Darl was all right "because the land was up-and-down ways then; it wasn't till that ere road come and switched the land round longways ... that they begun to threaten me out of him, trying to short-hand me with the law".¹⁹

The intense activity of private worlds in As I Lay Dying does not diminish the importance of the public world. According to our terms, the public world may, for any one character, consist of other characters and this arrangement is exemplified by the structure of As I Lay Dying. The 'communal consciousness' of the Bundrens is shaped as forcibly by Addie as that of the county as a whole is by history. How each of the characters stands in relation to her is of crucial importance both for themselves and for the others. She is their past history, moulding

them psychologically and socially. The design of the plot emphasises this; basically linear, it traces the events from immediately prior to Addie's death, through the journey with her body to the burial, then, with a leap, back to the farmstead and the new situation pertaining there. We see these events taking place through the dialogue of the characters and their unspoken thoughts. In their un verbalised thoughts, their unspoken observations and the things they remark in their environment, we perceive the extant pattern of inter-familial relationships. Although Addie, the central figure, is dead, her power remains alive in her children and the immediate, practical necessity of transporting her bodily remains parallels the psychological burden which they must also carry.

Faulkner stresses the introversion of the Bundren public world by introducing the comments of eight outsiders, people encountered en route to Jefferson, or near neighbours hovering around Addie's death-bed. Addie's section is sandwiched between those of Cora Tull and the Reverend Whitfield, the two characters most addicted to clichéd, moral bombast. Their empty words contrast sharply with Addie's profound concern with the nature of language and actuality. We see that Cora, who 'knows' the family well, grossly mis-interprets the inter-relationships, believing Darl to be the devoted son and Jewel the typical, selfish Bundren, "not him to miss the chance to make that extra few dollars at the price of his mother's goodbye kiss".²⁰ Tull and Armstid are more discerning, aware that "the only burden Anse Bundren's ever had is himself",²¹ and wryly acceding to the demands he makes upon them on the grounds of his spurious weakness. Because Anse is so limited and so easily understood, both outsiders and family describe him in similar terms. It is Peabody, the doctor who also appears in

Sartoris, who puts the Bundrens into a wider context, reflecting that Anse's static nature warrants roots, not feet and legs and that, had Anse been a tree "there wouldn't ever be a worry about this country being deforested".²² Peabody deliberately refrains from going out to the farm until he thinks he will be too late to save Addie, hoping thus to release her from Anse. Arriving at last, he sees that:

She has been dead these ten days. I suppose it's having been a part of Anse for so long that she cannot even make that change, if change it be. I can remember when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind. ... it is no more than a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or a town.²³

But even the perceptive Peabody cannot hope to fathom Addie's strategy for reconciling herself to life with Anse. He merely believes that she is like other women, "clinging to some trifling animal to whom they were never more than pack-horses".²⁴

Their journey, too, undertaken in the face of the most appalling difficulties, exemplifies the extent to which they are isolated from 'normal' patterns of behaviour. Had a comparable feat been accomplished by a group of Sartorises or Compsons, then it should have been given a high place in the annals of the family. Lacking this verbal tradition yet possessing an almost boundless naïve capacity for stoical endurance, the Bundrens stand as proof that Faulkner's conception of Yoknapatwpha is complete, not restricted to any particular class or bound by any need for articulate characters. What links the Bundrens to the Compsons is neither history nor any community of consciousness, but the author's conviction that public and private worlds are inextricably interwoven, that the construction which a private world places on its

environment may be directly traced to that environment. Whether the dominating feature of the latter be Addie Bundren or noble family tradition, the link remains.

Light in August (1932) explores the severance of that link. The tragedy of Joe Christmas stems from his need to find a public world to which he may belong. His is a crisis of identity created by a public world which sees the state of being white and the state of being black as mutually exclusive and opposed and which makes no allowance for the hybrid. The story of Joe Christmas, who bears no outward sign of 'the mark of Cain', is contrasted and interwoven with that of Lena Grove, who bears all-too-obviously the sign of her transgression. Yet she, with her "inwardlighted quality of tranquil and calm unreason and detachment",²⁵ is treated kindly by the world whose laws she has broken, whilst Joe is driven from place to place without ever being treated as a person. To Doc Hines, he is the 'devil's cub', to McEachern something to be shaped in his own righteous and rigorous image, "it was not that child's face which he was concerned with, it was the face of Satan",²⁶ and to Miss Burden, a Negro, the logical conclusion to her family's history of 'nigger-loving'. Even the reader cannot at first approach Christmas save through the medium of other people. That his story emerges gradually, by hearsay, is a measure of how far the structure of the overall fictional reality is woven about the central theme. Joe Christmas is the creature of the public world, the product of whatever definition it may choose to inflict upon him, be it the name which verges on parody or the title of Negro murderer. His death becomes an incident in the life of Percy Grimm, fascist and fanatic, the sordid triumph of white 'supremacy'. As Christmas flees from the posse, losing all sense of time, being rejected by white and black alike,

the narrator stands between us and his private world:

... he is entering it again, the street which ran for thirty years. It had been a paved street, where going should be fast. It had made a circle and he is still inside it. Though during the last seven days he has had no paved street, yet he has travelled further in these seven days than in all the thirty years before. And yet he is still inside the circle.²⁷

The structure of the overall fictional reality in Light in August is complex in the extreme, implying that, although none of the courses he embarked upon never led anywhere in terms of his search for identity, they were always delimited by the dictates of the public world. He could exercise no freedom of choice until he had broken free from the narrow defile described by black and white. But he is doomed to remain in the centre of the road, unable, metaphorically, to walk on either side, "a phantom, strayed out of its world and lost".²⁸ The image is introduced when Joe steps from the house where the waitress/prostitute whom he, in his innocence, loved, had practised her trade. The 'thousand savage and lonely streets' run from this point, from his first rejection on the grounds of colour. It is only towards the end that he realises that what he had mistaken for a linear pattern had, in fact, been circular, not a journey in search of an identity but a journey around the inescapable lack of it. He is without the cultural and moral roots necessary to development, lacking that third dimension which would enable him to translate the circle into a spiral:

Now it was still, quiet, the fecund earth now coolly suspirant. The dark was filled with voices, myriad, out of all time that he had known, as though all the past was a flat pattern. And going on. He thought of that with quiet astonishment: going on, myriad, familiar, since all that he had ever been was the same as all that was to be, since tomorrow to-be and had-been would be the same.²⁹

This reconciliation comes only when he has lost track of time and place, become in physical as well as in spiritual fact a hunted creature, "being hunted by white men at last into the black abyss which had been waiting, trying for thirty years to drown him and into which now and at last he had actually entered".³⁰

The bitter irony is, of course, that the woman whom he has murdered was, until she became the victim of a Negro, herself despised by the community as the last of a line of abolitionists. Thus, the revenge which the public world seeks is in itself a mockery, bearing personally on neither Miss Burden nor Joe, "as if the initial outrage of the murder carried in its wake and made of all subsequent actions something monstrous and paradoxical and wrong in themselves, against both reason and nature".³¹ Its fury is in large part caused by its own failure to recognise Christmas as a Negro and by his failure to make such recognition easy by acting in the manner prescribed for that race. This same resentment surrounds Lucas Beauchamp in Intruder in the Dust.

Although we do not come to 'know' Joe Christmas as we know the Bundrens, he is credited with psychological patterns akin to theirs and to those of the Compsons:

Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders. Knowing remembers believes a corridor in a big, long garbled building ... with sparrowlike child-trebling orphans in identical and uniform blue denim and in and out of remembering but in knowing as constant as the bleak cells ...³²

Even in this earliest beginnings, we see the lack of identity and the image of streets, or corridors, which later come to assume such significance. The distinction which Faulkner makes between 'memory' and

'knowing' is of some moment for, whilst, at one level, Joe Christmas may be seen as the victim of the racist South, he is also the victim of his own experiences. Hence, memory, the emotional as opposed to the intellectual faculty, is here seen to predispose him to view life in terms of essential uniformity. One cannot discount the effect of this personal, or rather 'impersonal', early life when seeking to understand his actions. These, rather than the conflict between black and white, may be the vital factor in his feelings immediately prior to murdering Miss Bunden:

... he believed with calm paradox that he was the volitionless servant of the fatality in which he believed he did not believe. He was saying to himself I had to do it already in the past tense; I had to do it. She said so herself.³³

It is her kindness and her demand that he pray with her which most offend him. He cannot cope with the former; the latter evokes the memory of the fanatical, well-intentioned ill-treatment of the young Christmas. Only in hindsight does he see the murder as an assertion of his black blood. He is fated to become involved only with those whose fanatical, obsessive drives try to shape him in various, impersonal ways. Faulkner succeeds in melding the broad racial issue with personal experience to create a remorseless force driving the hunted Christmas to his inevitable fate.

The story of Lena Grove frames and intertwines the Christmas story. It is in complete contrast. Lena, too, is often seen on roads, but these are actual roads peopled with helpful individuals and leading to an improbable but real goal. Where Christmas is associated with haste, with time compressed and with flight, Lena becomes unhaste, innocent

and bland eternity. It is she who opens the book, sitting beside the road, waiting for fortune to assist her on her way, projecting herself serenely into the future on the happy basis of the past, "behind her the four weeks, the evocation of far is a peaceful corridor paved with unflagging and tranquil faith".³⁴ Amid all the suffering, horror and bloodshed, she quietly gives birth and departs, unconcerned with where she may be going, merely certain that wherever it is she will be all right. Her child is born in the presence of Joe Christmas's grandmother, in the hut in which Christmas and the father of the child had lived, with the anxious assistance of Byron Bunch, the man who first met Christmas when he arrived in Jefferson and who is to become Lena's husband. Her story touches on that of Christmas only tangentially. Its main import lies in the implicit contrasts, the differing attitudes of the public world to the two 'sinners', the idea of innocence as opposed to wordly knowledge, the opposites of birth and death. Lena's 'innocence' is, however, a curious mixture of genuine ingenuity and a tacit ability to make the world her slave by assumption, by total reliance. Christmas, in spite of his experiences in 'savage and lonely streets', has a paradoxical innocence; he does not know how to relate to the public world, spending his life in search of a cultural identity.

Faulkner uses Lena's story as a means to disrupting the chronology of the book, rearranging it in such a way that the reader first sees Christmas through the eyes of the all-important public world. The novel opens in the present tense, with Lena Grove one day's journey from Jefferson, sitting by the roadside waiting for the wagon which she passed half a mile back to overtake her and give her a lift. A brief excursion into her past tells the reader all he need know of her life up to this point. The narrative then turns to the two men who watched her pass the

wagon and to their speculations about who she is and where she is going. This establishes from the outset the nature of the public world, close-knit and curious, willing to substitute speculation for knowledge in order that it may 'understand' everything. Lena and the wagon draw together, in a passage which bears quotation at length, for it is a superb example of Faulkner's virtuosity in using language:

The sharp and brittle crack and clatter of its weathered and ungreased wood and metal is slow and terrific: a series of dry sluggish reports carrying for half a mile across the hot still pinewiney silence of the August afternoon. Though the mules plod in steady and unflagging hypnosis, the vehicle does not seem to progress. It seems to hang suspended in the middle distance forever and forever, so infinitesimal is its progress, like a shabby bead upon the mild red string of road.³⁵

Partaking of this mood, Lena drowsily ponders on hearing the wagon before seeing it and through a series of steps with an internal logic of their own, imagines Lucas enjoying a similar experience in relation to her, "And so there will be two within his seeing before his remembering".³⁶

Having got her inevitable way, not only a lift from Armstid but a night in his house, where she remains supremely unaffected by the disapproval of Martha, she is taken next day to Varner's store and thence to Jefferson. As she crests the hill, she sees the pall of smoke hanging over the Burden house. It signifies nothing to her, either at this moment or later. She remains apart from the violence, enrapt in herself and her coming child, perpetually amazed at the distance she has travelled, "My, my. A body does get around".³⁷ These words recur at the end of the novel, as she is once more on the move, volitionless but secure in her enjoyment of motion, the antithesis of Christmas whose search was

ever for rest but who was driven to eternal travel which only ended with death.

At this point, Faulkner introduces Byron Bunch, the man of habit who is shaken from his dry, habitual round by falling in love with Lena. With details deliberately suppressed, the story of Christmas is told from the point of view of the town, Byron's past is rehearsed and then the narrative returns to the present, with the arrival of Lena at the mill. Only after an excursion into Hightower's chequered career does the focus begin to concentrate on Christmas, whose history cannot be disposed of in a few pages. From the night preceding the murder, we are taken back thirty years to his arrival at the orphanage and, for the next one-hundred and sixty pages, we trace his story until we return to the night of the murder. The man whom we have first been introduced to as a mystery, with "something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home",³⁸ and then seen as a Negro and a murderer, gradually emerges as one who has no definite shape, who has spent his life resisting the moulding pressures of various fanatics yet who has never attained an identity which would allow him to relate to his public world.

The murder itself is over quickly and four days later Christmas is caught, being led, ironically, through a 'lane' of spectators from the Mottstown jail and discovering, on the eve of his death, that he has literally and metaphorically come full circle, returning at random to the place of his birth. His story ends as an incident in the life of Percy Grimm, Lena's concludes as a tale told by the man who gave she and Bunch a lift from Jefferson. Thus, although the structure which Faulkner imposes on his overall fictional reality relies on a disjunction

of chronology, the effect is not one of unnecessary complication; it allows Faulkner to characterize not only the individual figures but the community which must bear so large a share of the blame for Christmas's plight. Towards Lena it is forgiving, towards Hightower, ruthless then dismissive, towards Miss Burden, uncaring and towards Bunch curious; yet, in none of these cases does it exhibit the intolerance and fanaticism attendant on matters of race. All these misfits have been accommodated by the community, even Hightower who outlasts harassment by the Klu Klux Klan to become a fixture in the communal consciousness, "the town had a habit of saying things about the disgraced minister which they did not believe themselves for too long a time to break themselves of it".³⁹

Miss Burden, as the grand-daughter of an abolitionist, is still treated with habitual suspicion, the focal point of many rumours about 'queer relations' with Negroes in spite of the sixty years that have passed since her ancestors confronted John Sartoris over the question of Negro votes and were killed as a result, "But it is there: the descendants of both in relation to one another ghosts, with between them the phantom of the old spilled blood and old horror and anger and fear".⁴⁰ This continuation of old attitudes, the fixity of viewpoint in the public world, is a factor which cannot be ignored in the novel. It affects every individual, this communal consciousness around which all must either dispose themselves in attitudes of conformity or accept a degree of exclusion. The fear of Negroes is ingrained and Christmas's act lends conviction to the hatred and the fear:

... the casual Yankees and the poor whites and even the southerners who had lived for a while in the north, who believed aloud that it was an anonymous negro crime committed not by negro but by Negro and who knew, believed and hoped that she had been ravished too 41

Collectively, the people who 'moil and clot' around the scene of the crime are viewed as ghouls, feeding on the horror which imagination will augment: the women, who have 'ever loved death better than peace', and the men, gathering "as if all their individual five senses had become one organ of looking",⁴² wait until the fire can become a 'permanent part of their lives as well', "a monument which could be returned to at any time".⁴³

The structure of the overall fictional reality serves to evoke the public perspective and to explore the historical psychological dimensions which induce Christmas's crisis of identity. It is never established whether or not he actually has any Negro blood and although Gavin Stevens, a commentator who is usually given some credence, may explain the story in terms of a battle between black and white blood, these terms need not be taken literally. From what we know of the man, moral and immoral or sane and insane might equally well be used. The conflict is phrased in terms of black and white in response to the particular context, but it has more universal implications and is translated by Christmas's private world into a search for cultural, and hence moral, affinity. The public world of the South stands condemned for putting so arbitrary a pressure on the private worlds of its inhabitants, condemned not by polemic or rational, liberal argument but by the complex aesthetic evocation of the results of such pressures. Neither Lena Grove nor Hightower have any greater claim on society than Christmas, yet, because they are white, they survive.

Of course, it is not possible for Christmas as an individual to relate to the black/white dichotomy in the broad terms described above and it is manifested in his personal experience in a variety of ways. Seeking his identity, he goes through black and white areas, but cannot penetrate beneath the surface differences; the white streets are 'cool', well-ordered and spaced out, places where he can 'walk quiet', thinking, "That's all I wanted. That don't seem like a whole lot to ask".⁴⁴ By contrast, the Negro area is full of cramped 'cabinshapes', echoing with 'fecundmellow voices' and claustrophobic, "as though all he and all other manshaped life about him had been returned to the lightless hot wet primogenitive".⁴⁵ He is forever fighting the Negro element, as if, in naturalistic novel terms, it were the 'baser instinct'. Only towards the end, when he is physically exhausted and mentally disturbed, does he welcome the 'black tide' which he feels rising from the Negro shoes he wears. In dispossessing Negroes of their church, just prior to this, he is exploiting the power of white supremacy, abusing this part of his heritage in an effort akin to that of Addie Bundren. Both characters are in some way intent upon finding the actuality underlying the word, "he had once taunted white men into calling him negro in order to fight them, beat them or be beaten; now he fought the negro who called him white".⁴⁶ Yet Joe resists the depths of depravity to which Miss Burden tries to drive him, feeling himself 'being sucked down into a bottomless morass' although he does not flee from it, "something held him, as the fatalist can always be held: by curiosity, pessimism, sheer inertia".⁴⁷ He is doomed to dwell among extremes, as though the polarities which he believes he encompasses prevent him from walking a middle way.

This idea is stated explicitly towards the end of the novel, as Joe once

more runs through the alien landscape to which he belongs:

It is as though he wants to see his native earth again in all its phases for the first or the last time. He had grown to manhood in the country where, like the unswimming sailor, his physical shape and his thoughts has been moulded by its compulsions without his learning anything about its actual shape and feel.⁴⁸

Again, the inescapable polarity appears in 'first or last', effectively reminding us that Joe has found no niche commensurate with his state, that his vision, never having had the opportunity to become limited, is ever new, innocent and unfettered. Miss Burden, talking of her father, defines the link between public and private worlds, "a man would have to act as the land where he was born had trained him to act".⁴⁹

Faulkner does give credence to the social determinist argument. We cannot blame Joe for his lack of shape, nor even see him as an active agent in his own downfall. Such a perspective is prohibited by our awareness of his personal experiences, the thread of tragic coincidence which drove him from fanatic to fanatic, extreme to extreme. However, Faulkner's treatment of the story removes it from the 'naturalist' or 'realist' categories. Bending chronology, moulding language, creating imagery, forging symbolic and thematic links, he raises Light in August to the level of high art. Precisely because of the manner in which private and public worlds are merged, the structure of the overall fictional reality is remote from the mundane or the factual and the novel becomes a more powerful piece of propaganda. Christmas, Grimm, Miss Burden, Doc Hines, McEachern and Hightower are all, in their various ways, logical extensions of tendencies in the public world, extreme embodiments of trends which, in their everyday aspect are too muted to be seen as threatening.

Grimm, with his "sublime and implicit faith in physical courage and blind obedience, and a belief that the white race is superior to all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races ...",⁵⁰ is the active counterpart of the theoretical Doc Hines, who preached to Negroes "humility before all skins lighter than theirs, preaching the superiority of the white race, himself his own exhibit A, in fanatic and unconscious paradox".⁵¹ Miss Burden, with her wish to forcibly raise the Negro hopelessly intermixed with her frustrated sexual desire, contemplating the completion of her heritage 'even to a bastard negro child' is little better, no less selfish in her Liberalism than Grimm and Hines are in fascism. Hightower represents the Southerner who is static and immobile in his contemplation of past glories, brought to life at the moment of his death with the realisation of how much harm his obsession has done, "And if I am my dead grandfather on the instant of his death, then my wife, his grandson's wife ... the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife since I could neither let my grandson live or die".⁵² McEachern's belief in a just God leads to comparable inhumanity, causing suffering both to Joe and to his own wife. Portrayed unflatteringly as a collective whole, the public world is no less likeable in its individual representatives. Ideals, obsessions and ideas prohibit progress. Byron alone who "fell in love, ... contrary to all the tradition of his austere and jealous country raising which demands in the object physical inviolability",⁵³ eludes the grasp of stultifying ideals.

... and he every man is the arbiter of his own virtues whether or not you consider it courageous is of more importance than the act itself otherwise you could not be in earnest ... and he you wanted to sublimate a piece of natural human folly into a horror and the exercise it with truth and i it was to isolate her out of the loud world so that it would have to flee us of necessity and then the sound of it would be as if it had never been⁵⁴

The above quotation from The Sound and the Fury (1929) is a variation on the theme of stultifying ideals. In this novel, the public world is far removed from the events, which come to the reader through the filter of individual sensibilities. The book is divided into four sections, three of them devoted to the thoughts of members of the Compson family and the fourth to the words of the narrator. Quentin, the 'voice' in this quotation, has a private world incapable of coming to terms with the reality of his sister's sexual promiscuity. In part, he deplores the act because it marks a break with the long family tradition of sound, moral conduct but, underlying this, we see a sexual element in his love for Caddie which leads to further torment and despair. As his father points out, the attempt to aggrandise Caddie's act is a strategy dependent on escape from reality. The 'reckless escapade' of the Sartoris sons comes, through telling, to be an act significant in terms of the fate of humanity. Quentin's wish to make promiscuity into incest bears the same stamp, the desire of those descendants of the heroes of the South to elevate their own actions to a comparable plane, even though, in this case, it entails increasing the horror rather than the heroism.

Quentin naturally fails to escape reality; he merely perverts it, becoming obsessed with time and with his own shadow, that paradoxical reminder of his own, inescapable substance. Seeing in water the fluidity and mutability which he wishes were the qualities of time, he tries to draw the two together but succeeds only in distorting his private worlds and driving himself to the increasingly inevitable suicide by drowning. It is the only possible way of merging the two, yet it is neither heroic nor in any way effective in altering the actuality. His section opens on the morning of his suicide with an immediate link between water and

time, "it was between seven and eight o'clock and then I was in time again hearing the watch".⁵⁵ As the day progresses he becomes ever more disturbed and memory and reality merge; fighting his college fellow Gerald, Quentin is only conscious of his attempt to fight with Dalton Ames, Caddie's seducer. Grammatical structures cease and the whole narrative becomes a river of words, associations, images, all making sense when one has read the succeeding sections in which Jason and the narrator re-tell the events in accessible order.

Quentin's obsession with time is not without roots. In giving him the watch, his Father had remarked, "I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire. ... I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it".⁵⁶ He tries to finish with it by breaking the watch but it continues to click, although bereft of hands and dial. In taking it to the watchmaker to see if it can be repaired he seems to be seeking confirmation that time will continue even after he is no longer 'in' it. Throughout the day he is haunted by the chiming of the college clock and by the movement of shadows, whose positions indicate time.

Shadows also indicate actuality. Quentin spends the day trying to escape his, 'trampling my shadow's bones into the concrete with hard heels', 'standing in' his own shadow, walking down steps 'just ahead of it' and trying to drown it:

... my shadow leaning flat upon the water, so easily had I tricked it that it would not quit me. At least fifty feet it was, and if only I had something to blot it into the water, holding it until it was drowned.⁵⁷

His private world is clearly so deranged that he has come to believe that his shadow is the substance of his being, the thing which contains his suffering and from which he must escape. Again, the Shakesperian reference in the title appears to extend to within the book itself, life for Quentin is 'but a walking shadow'. His displacement of emotion parallels his displacement of blame; time not actuality is the enemy, for were it not for time then the event would not have happened, would have no tense and therefore no existence.

The purification which he seeks in the water is not for himself alone, "if it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame of the two of us more than dead".⁵⁸ His ideal is that he and Caddie should be united, beyond actuality and time. He strives to replace her lovers, "you thought all the time it was them but it was me listen I fooled you all the time it was me ...".⁵⁹ We gather that not only has Quentin tried to seduce Caddie, and failed, but that his college fellows regard him as odd, calling Shreve his 'wife' and speculating about his virginity. His father believes that his trouble will be resolved if he can overcome his own 'negative state' of purity, but Quentin hates women, describing them as "liquid putrifaction liked drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odour of honeysuckle all mixed up".⁶⁰ There is no explicit statement of Quentin's sexual abnormality, although his self-centred and ambitious mother, his love for Caddie and his loathing of women in general might well strike those with a fondness for Freud as being highly significant.

His state of mind is not so easily defined. Faulkner succeeds in showing that the nature of Quentin's concern for Caddie is far from purely sexual. With an idiot brother and a renegade sister, he is

burdened with the continuance of the family's good name. He is also aware of the glorious traditions of the South and all these elements combine to put a distorting pressure on his private world, "I used to think of death as a man something like Grandfather"⁶¹ he remarks, showing how far he, like the Bundrens, needs to express things in terms of what he knows, people and environment. When that environment becomes unbearable, disrupted, his private world response is in like fashion.

Sometimes I could put myself to sleep by saying that (when will it, the rain, stop) over and over until after the honeysuckle got all mixed up in it and the whole thing came to symbolise night and unrest I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of grey half-light where all stable things become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent in themselves with the denial of significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not ...⁶²

Honeysuckle becomes the emblem and odour of corruption, for it is associated with Caddie's promiscuity. It appears in both Quentin's and Benjy's sections, its sweet, cloying scent evocative of ripeness bordering on decay. The above passages show how the initial whiff of corruption disrupted and undermined the rest of the structure upon which Quentin's private world depended for meaning. The analysis of fundamental psychological pattern, with ontological insecurity following hard on environmental disturbance, mirrors, in an elaborate way, the pattern discerned in Darl Bundren. Thus, although we would appear to be immersed in the depths of a private world, the public world is not without relevance; the link between the historical (in the sense of immediate family history) and psychological remains a basic element in the structure.

Despite this, Quentin can make fun of the sort of 'history' purveyed by Gerald's mother, "the next one is to be how Gerald throws his nigger downstairs ... I will wait for the one about the sawmill husband came to the kitchen door with a shotgun Gerald went down and bit the gun in two".⁶³ He scoffs at this attempt to endow everyday actions with significance and heroic proportions, whilst trying to do the same thing himself; the difference may be that where Gerald's mother's stories are designed to impress the public world, Quentin's are turned inwards. He has an ironic awareness of sorts, saying that Gerald's mother approves of her son associating with him "because I had at least revealed a blundering sense of noblesse oblige by getting myself born below Mason Dixon",⁶⁴ describing Herbert as 'hearty, celluloid like a drummer' and Dalton Ames as 'theatrical fixture, just papier mache', but this ironic awareness is limited in its application. Quentin may have learned since coming North that, "a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behaviour, a sort of obverse reflections of the white people he lives among",⁶⁵ but he has gained little insight into his own relation to history. The images of static motion in his section, the 'gull motionless in midair', evoke his basic immobility in face of events which he cannot escape, cannot blot from his mind, can only contemplate.

... she ran out of the mirror like a cloud, her veil
 swirling in long glints ... running out of the mirror
 the smell of roses roses the voice that breathed o'er
 Eden. ... running across the grass, into the
 bellowing where T.P. in the dew Whooeey Sassprilluh
 Benjy under the box bellowing.⁶⁶

Quentin's vision of Caddie's wedding day is remarkably akin to that of Benjy, the idiot, who also records phenomenon from the external world, smells and movements, without being able to impose any logical pattern

on them. He, like Quentin, is obsessed with the disappearance of the sister who had been his surrogate mother. He and T.P. are drunk that day, although Benjy does not, of course, understand what is the matter. He assumes that objects move in relation to him rather than vice versa. The effects of drink are, therefore, visible in the objects, "the cellar stairs ran up the hill in the moonlight and T.P. fell up the hill into the moonlight",⁶⁷ "the cows came jumping out of the barn",⁶⁸ etc. Benjy's assumption that he is the static centre round which things move mirrors his mental immobility. Stuck forever with the mental age of three, he cannot find any rationale underlying the movements of objects. 'The plate went away' is his impression of the plate being removed by unseen hands. Thus, he continues to believe that Caddie will return, spending his days watching the golfers and bellowing everytime they shout 'caddie'. Although Quentin strives to come to grips with the unbearable facts through intellectual effort, his inevitable failure brings him closer to Benjy; he too records phenomenon from the public world without imposing on them any logical framework; the fundamental lack of logic or justice which he finds in his experience with Caddie overwhelms him until he can find no logic in any aspect of the public world.

Benjy's is the first section in the novel, barely comprehensible on first reading, for he cannot see things in their chronological perspective. His mind works by association, a word or an image evoking memories from any one of the seven separate occasions which have engraved themselves on his memory. Chronological changes are marked by italics, the associational link being given in full, then, the new time having been established, the print returns to normal. Which time it is is not immediately apparent; stray references to Benjy's age or size must act

as the clue, for his vision remains static, he continues to record dialogue, smells and movements in the same way whether he be three or thirty-three. 'Caddie smelled like trees' is his way of expressing contentment with the world; when she comes home after her first promiscuous act, it is the smell which gives Ben the sense that something is wrong and which sets him bellowing. He cannot even differentiate sleep from wakefulness, "Caddie smelled like trees and like when she says we were asleep".⁶⁹ Even his bellowing is not something he can control, "I began to cry. It went loud".⁷⁰

In spite of all this, he is the register of the family's moral and social condition. His bellowing forces Caddie to face that what she is doing is wrong, "I won't anymore, ever, Benjy",⁷¹ it is he who smells death, in relation to both his father and his grandmother, and he who suffers most when the pasture has to be sold to finance Quentin's career at Harvard. The fire, the cushion and the mirror are his sources of comfort, but even the mirror has to be sold as the family fortunes decline:

The windows went black, and the tall place on the wall came and I went and touched it. It was like a door, only it wasn't a door.

The fire came behind me and I went to the fire and sat on the floor, holding the slipper. The fire went higher. It went onto the cushion in Mother's chair.⁷²

This, like much else in Ben's section, is not immediately comprehensible. It is only later, in Jason's section, that we learn what it means:

Ben went to the dark place on the wall where the mirror used to be, rubbing his hands on it and slobbering and moaning ... He put the poker back and got the cushion out of Mother's chair and gave it to Ben, and he hunkered down in front of the fireplace and got quiet.⁷³

When Ben says, "I got undressed and looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. ... They gone.",⁷⁵ the reader must wait until Jason's appearance to realise that Ben has been castrated. His attempt to chase the schoolgirls, "I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes were going again",⁷⁶ is, like much else about him, misinterpreted. For him, it is not a sexual act but an attempt to recapture the 'bright shapes' which signalled sleep and security and the presence of Caddie.

"Then Ben wailed again, hopeless and prolonged. It was nothing. Just sound. It might have been all time and injustice and sorrow become vocal for an instant by a conjunction of planets".⁷⁷ This narrative comment leaves the reader to wonder how far Benjy's bellowing does 'signify nothing'. As readers, we know that what the public world, save for Caddie, takes to be 'just sound' is in fact the expression of an active sensibility. Ben's section is so structured that it reveals both the limits and the potentialities of his private world; in spite of his inability to order experience in meaningful ways, he registers the most vital moments and responds with moral outrage in the form of bellowing. His love of flowers, his sensitivity to scents and nature and his craving for stability and affection mark him as the most moral, if the least effectual of the Compsons. The novel closes with an explicit statement of just this:

The broken flower drooped from Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place.⁷⁸

Faulkner makes certain vital connections between the private worlds of Benjamin and Quentin. Ben must accept the public world in the form in

which it comes to him; he has not the ability to attempt to impose his own meaning on it. Neither can he extract meaning from it, he powerless in face of objects, dialogues and events, capable only of feeling comfort or discomfort without even analysing why one state rather than another exists at any given moment. Quentin, on the other hand, cannot accept the public world as it is, trying first to reject the fact of his sister's promiscuity and then all reality, even time. Although outwardly the 'obverse' of Ben, he is no more able than his brother to extract meaning from the public world or to analyse his own state of mind. His all-too-active private world leads to the same end as Ben's, to a vision chaotic and without reason. Only because he has actively achieved this state does he need to terminate it. Ben's capacity for endurance and acceptance are born of his passivity. Hence, we see Ben on his thirty-third birthday and Quentin on the day of his death; Ben is outside time, the candles mean nothing to him. Quentin has to put out his 'brief candle' to achieve this state.

Jason, the third of the Compson brothers, is truly the 'obverse' of Quentin. Forced to shoulder the burden of the family at a practical level, he is embittered in the extreme, "I never had time to be. I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or to drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work".⁷⁹ His relationship with Caddie's daughter, Quentin, is a callous parody of Quentin's relationship with Caddie. Practical to the last, he objects to her whoring not on any moral ground but because she is indiscreet, although he has few illusions about the family's standing in the community:

And there I was, without a hat, looking like I was crazy too. Like a man would naturally think, one of them is crazy and another one drowned himself and the other one was turned out into the street by her husband, what's the reason the rest of them are not crazy too.⁸⁰

It is through his section that we begin to see the picture in factual detail, the self-centred mother, the dishonest and conniving Jason, the shame and the financial hardship. Jason's section is dated 6th. April 1928, the day on which the female Quentin gives the family fortunes another push on the downward slope by running off with a showman, taking with her all the money which Jason had misappropriated from the funds sent for her by Caddie. Jason the fascist, "What this country needs is white labour. Let these damned trifling niggers starve for a couple of years",⁸¹ the liar and the thief, reduced to clerk in another man's store, cannot be regarded as more admirable than Quentin. His vision is like that of the Snopes, self-seeking and dishonest, yet it is as traceable as Quentin's to the decline of family standards.

Having seen the characters from the point of view of their private worlds, it comes as something of a shock to be given an objective description of them in the fourth, narrative section. The "big man who appeared to have been shaped from some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to the frame which supported it"⁸² is Ben and the "cold and shrewd, with close-thatched brown hair curled into two stubborn hooks, one either side of his forehead like a bartender in caricature"⁸³ is Jason. Whilst these outward appearances do not conflict with what we know of the private worlds underlying them, they derive impact from the sudden shift between subjective and objective vision. This section not only illuminates all that has gone before, being arranged in logical, comprehensible order, it

also brings into focus the shadowy figure of Dilsey, faithful servant and arbiter of the successive generations of negro youths who have charge of Ben. We do not come to 'know' Dilsey as we do the other three characters; her private world, save for a single suggestion, remains closed to us. It is in her actions, her continuing care of all the Compsons, her boundless tolerance and her attempts to avert the fate she so clearly sees awaiting the family, that her worth resides. As she strides purposefully across a landscape "flat and without perspective as painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth", heading for the negro church and the apocalypse, "I seed de first en de last, Dilsey said. Never you mind me.",⁸⁴ she seems to possess all the qualities lacking in the Compsons. She faces the public world directly, without Jason's need for the force of money, Quentin's obliquity, Mrs. Compson's perpetual self-pity and self-justification or Mr. Compson's sodden stoicism.

And the congregation seemed to watch him with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words ...⁸⁵

Through the medium of the insignificant-seeming minister, Dilsey rises above her purely practical level to the height of emotion, to the point where she can see "de darkness and de death everlastin upon de generations".⁸⁶ Implicit in the vision of Dilsey sitting 'bolt upright' beside the 'rapt' Ben, crying "rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb",⁸⁷ is the tragedy of the Compson family, a tragedy which might be interpreted in terms of the fate of the old values in a modern world but which, without this sort of induction, is simply one of wasted potential. The Sound and the Fury, together with

Sartoris and Requiem for a Nun, shows that Faulkner realised the historical/psychological pattern contained the seeds of its own decay. It could not expand nor even continue in a straight line but was fated to become involuted, either to become futile through too great a degree of particularity, as in Quentin's case, or compromised by the need to adjust to altered social conditions, as in Jason's.

It is in Absalom, Absalom! (1936) that the nature of the historical/psychological dimension is most fully explored. Where, in The Sound and the Fury the private worlds of the characters concentrated upon immediate family history, in Absalom, Absalom! they range freely across the broad spectrum of Yoknapatawpha life. The pivotal story of Thomas Sutpen has little personal relevance to any save Rose Coldfield, yet by degrees, through the verbal tradition and the exercise of imaginations attuned to the fundamental rhythms of the Southern historical consciousness, it comes to have intensity and meaning. The novel opens with the story being told by Rosa, the sole spokesman with any claim to direct, if partial, involvement and ends with those of Shreve and Quentin. Even Shreve, the Canadian, succumbs to the hypnotic power of the story, to the extent that he too has the ability to tell it.

The structure of Absalom, Absalom! is at once more and less complicated than that of The Sound and the Fury. Where, in the latter, the reader could not comprehend the first two sections without having read the last two, the Sutpen story is told in its entirety three times in the first four pages. Throughout the remainder of the novel, these bare bones are overlaid with many layers of flesh, the composition of each successive layer revealing much about the private world of the narrating

character. At the same time, the story itself alters subtly, the crucial mystery of Henry's motivation in killing Bon affecting the disposition of the peripheral material. Each private world engaged in the act of recreation is alive not only to the nature of the private worlds involved in the original story, but to the nature of its fellows, to the prejudices and distortions inherent in their interpretations. Listening to Miss Coldfield, Quentin is aware that she dramatises the story, "Out of the quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene as peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek still in hair, clothes and beard".⁸⁸ In the contrast between the actual setting and the events evoked, we can discern the effects of Miss Coldfield's over-long contemplation of the story, the transposition of emotion and drama from the actual to the imagined. Her private world, although until this stage alone in its recapitulation of the story, has followed the trend discernible in the verbal tradition as a whole, that inevitable aggrandisement of theme. The composite image, man-horse-demon, succinctly implies the effect of memory upon what was once actuality.

... talking in that grim haggard amazed voice until at last listening would renege and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the bidding and dreamy and victorious dust.⁸⁹

This passage, like the one at the outset of Sartoris, "freed as he was of time and flesh, he (John Sartoris) was a far more palpable presence than either of the two old men",⁹⁰ shows the degree to which the past is envisaged as a living force, as 'palpable' as the dust-motes in Miss Coldfield's room. There is a positive, not merely a metaphorical, link

between the fragments of the past suspended in memory and the dust suspended in the air. Even the sparrows, here coming in 'random gusts', act as an element in the sense of continuity established from novel to novel. In The Sound and the Fury, Quentin encounters the cold stare of a sparrow as he strives to come to terms with his heritage, the Courthouse and the sparrows are 'the oldest things in town' in Requiem, and so on. It is a mark of the thoroughness of Faulkner's aesthetic design that even such trivial details should carry the sense of continuity in the public world. Sutpen, too, as the man-horse-demon, strikes a chord. Hightower's vision of his grandfather stopped mid-gallop, young Bayard Sartoris on the uprearing horse, John Sartoris riding his way through The Unvanquished are but three examples of this conjunction which comes, in terms of Faulkner's fictional code', to evoke heroic acts of the Civil War and may, as in Sartoris, be used as a compressed ironic comment on the fate of this heritage. It is no coincidence that Flem Snopes, the incomer whose arrival marks the start of the disintegration of traditional social standards, trades in untameable horses.

Sutpen is also an incomer, a self-made man whose desire to acquire the outward trappings of a Southern gentleman is, like that of Gatsby, not based on any admiration for the 'things' themselves. What Gatsby does for love, Sutpen does for revenge, to restore to his private world the dignity it lost when, as a child, he was turned from the door of the plantation owner's house by a Negro. Like Gatsby, he fails; but, because he is a Faulknerian character, he refuses to accept this failure, becoming every more desperate and extreme as he enacts increasingly grotesque parodies of his original grand design. In a sense, although he does not realise it, he does achieve the status of Southern gentleman.

His 'indomitable' refusal to accept defeat and his frantic efforts to exclude even the suspicion of black blood from his line bespeak the ingrained attitudes of the old South.

Jefferson, like East Egg, surrounds Sutpen with myths, 'running him to earth' and giving him the opportunity to tell his story before resorting to imagination. There is always a time-lag between Sutpen's actions and the town's discovery of them. The wagon 'smelling like a wolf-den' passes through the midst of the town with its cargo of 'wild negroes', "but the legend of Sutpen's negroes was not to begin at once".⁹¹ Only when they have reached the Hundreds does their fame begin to spread back into the town itself. Repeatedly, the townspeople fail to see the obvious; they do not realise that Sutpen does not drink because he cannot afford to return the compliment to his hosts, that he wears the same clothes because he has no others. They are so intent on dramatising his story that they miss its actual dramatic quality, overlooking Sutpen's "pristine aptitude for platform drama and childlike heroic simplicity".⁹² Quentin hears of all this through his father, who had it from his father, who claimed to have been the only one to get near the truth; the re-construction itself has the piecemeal quality of the original, the conflict between the overtly fantastic wild negroes and French architect and the even more fantastic actuality being recreated by Quentin as he in turn tells the story to Shreve. After two years, "the town now believed that it knew him",⁹³ especially the women, who sensed that he was looking for a wife to complete his household. However, he succeeds in amazing them by lighting on Mr. Coldfield, "In their surprise they forgot that Mr. Coldfield has a marriageable daughter. They did not think of the daughter at all".⁹⁴ Wild speculation obscures the obvious, as Rosa puts it:

Not that he wanted to be one (a gentleman), or even to be taken for one. No. That was not necessary, since all he would need would be Ellen's and our father's name on a wedding license (or on any other patent of respectability) ... because our father knew who his father was in Tennessee and who his grandfather had been in Virginia and our neighbours and the people we lived among knew that we knew and we knew that they knew we knew and we knew that they would have believed us about whom and where we came from even if we had lied.⁹⁵

Sutpen's ruthless pursuit of his goal, respectability, ensures that he may never attain it. After his second trip away from Jefferson, to buy furnishings, he becomes a species of public enemy, the town feeling that it too has been implicated in the felony which it assumes must underlie this acquisition. He is enshrined forever in the annals of the town as a renegade, the very trappings which signify respectability becoming, in the context of Sutpen's Hundreds, symbols of its antithesis. Yet Sutpen makes the status he strives to attain seem parochial and somehow beneath him. It is not just that he seizes upon its externals in so direct a fashion that their basic shallowness is revealed in the act of uprooting and isolating them from their cultural background. Jefferson, trembling in superstitious awe of his Negroes, failing to realise that the tongue which they speak is French and not some outlandish mumbo-jumbo, comes to look effect when compared with Sutpen. He is prepared to fight negro-fashion with his slaves, unafraid to test his supremacy, where the rest of the white community merely assumes superiority. Rosa, in saying, "If he was mad it was only his compelling dream which was insane and not his methods",⁹⁶ acknowledges that his lack of decorum and nicety entailed a more, not a less, realistic grasp of the means to his end.

No sooner has Sutpen achieved his dream, than the Civil War comes and destroys his plantation:

He was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony - the stage manager, call him what you will - was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shape of the next one.⁹⁷

Sutpen plays his part in defending his adopted public world. Indeed, he takes over from Colonel Sartoris and earns, in Rosa's eyes, "the stature and shape of a hero too" by fighting for "four honourable years for the soil and the tradition of the land where she had been born".⁹⁸ He returns undismayed, prepared, even at the age of sixty, to begin anew, exhorting his less resilient fellow to do likewise, "telling them that if every man in the South would do as he himself was doing, would see to the restoration of his own land, the general land and the South would save itself".⁹⁹

What has so far been said of the Sutpen story has been extracted from the various version presented in the book, the factual outline dredged up from the depths of complex narratives. Quentin Compson asserts his force as a narrator by bringing Henry and Bon from under the shadow of their father, who dominates all other recapitulations of the tale. This story, involving a brother and a sister as well as an older, male figure, naturally attracts Quentin, whose incestuous feelings towards Caddie and latent homosexuality have already been discussed in the context of The Sound and The Fury. He turns it into a tale of repressed sexual desired. Sutpen is defeated not only by the Civil War but by a civil war within his own family. His son, Henry, kills Charles Bon, the fiance of Judith and his own best friend and then disappears, leaving Sutpen with nothing of his initial grand design. Having suggested to Rosa that he will marry her if she first bears a son by him, Sutpen, the

"ancient and varicose and despairing Faustus ... who could at one time have galloped ten miles in any direction without crossing his own boundary" is reduced to "using candy to seduce Wash Jones fifteen-year old grand-daughter"¹⁰⁰ in vain hopes that he might still, at the age of sixty and with a near poor-white girl-child, re-establish his line. The 'stage manager' decrees that he should, again, partially succeed. Millie bears a child, but it is another girl and as Sutpen, in his disappointment, insults the mother, Wash Jones, his long-time admirer and now partner, kills him.

The story of Sutpen, père, is writ large across the pages of Absalom, Absalom! General Compson, his sole confidant, claims that he, like Gatsby, had the quality of 'innocence'. Sutpen is also given to bombastic phrases learned from books, "and there was nothing of vanity, nothing comic in it either, Grandfather said, because of that innocence which he had never lost".¹⁰¹ It is through General Compson that we learn a little of Sutpen's past, how had scrapped the prototype of his grand design because he suspected his 'Spanish' wife was in fact part-Negro. It is the fruit of that first effort, Charles Bon, who is the undoing of the second, threatening to marry Judith in an attempt to get his father to recognise him as a son. Had Sutpen, so careless of other moral niceties and viewing Negroes as 'children's balloons with painted faces', been able to ignore the faint suspicion of Negro blood, then his whole plan might have succeeded. Why this man, whose morality is marked by 'the minimum of logic, mere ratiocination', should balk at so apparently trivial a thing is not clear. It may be that, like other fanatics, he has an ideal of purity which cannot be satisfied by mere appearance of respectability or it may be that, as we have already noted, his analysis of the elements of white respectability, enabling

him to ignore the time-consuming veneer of social nicety, had also led him to see that the black/white issue was of prime importance and could not be overlooked. Whatever his motive, this obsession elevates his story from the level of magnificent self-making and puts it in the annals of the South. Both Sutpen and the South are doomed because they fail to come to terms with the racial question. By treating the issue in this way, using an outsider bent on becoming a part of the fated culture, Faulkner succeeds in penetrating deep into the heart of the matter.

The biblical reference in the title is not restricted to King David's lament, 'My son, my son'. Sutpen's story is, in one sense, a parable, a tale whose moral significance is also its major significance. And, like a parable, the story is rooted in the verbal tradition. It is told by men who, although they may appreciate its meaning, and may even strive to attain the ideal state it indicates, finds the struggle hard and contrary both to their cultural and personal dispositions.

The characters in the original tale do not have private worlds authenticated by the author. Their actions are known to us, their motives are inferred by the other characters or by the town, which acts as a sort of chorus, crying "Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen." or "Rosie Coldfield lose him, weep him; caught a beau but couldn't keep him.",¹⁰² as the action demands. Yet it is Faulkner, not his characters, who must bear final responsibility for the casting and the staging of the whole novel. The scene, the familiar world of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha, is lit, as never before, with a lurid, intense light suggestive of doom. Against this, the actions of Sutpen, Henry, Bon, Judith and Clytie seem exaggerated and unreal. The attempts of Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin and

Shreve to give these actions a semblance of reality enjoy, in this order, degrees of success. Rosa, as has already been noted, tends to dramatise in an intense, almost insane, effort to impress upon Quentin the import of her story. She who is so unwilling to excuse herself for planning to marry Sutpen, who tries to face up to the reality of her feelings at this juncture and who even goes so far as to say that he was no longer an 'ogre', a term she relegates to her childish fancies, retrogresses as the tale goes on. Sutpen becomes, once more, a demon. At first she suggests that Quentin might make practical use of the story she is about to tell:

Because you are going away to attend the college at Harvard. ... So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe someday you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will want a new gown or a new chair for the house and you can write this and submit to the magazines.¹⁰³

This apparently civil, polite interaction is full of irony and pathos. It is ironic in the light of what follows, a story in which the central character is conceived of as a demon, a rambling expiation of long suppressed thoughts. Miss Rosa's notion that this may be exchanged for a new gown or a chair shows how far she has lost touch with the real shape of the story she tells. Her 'practical' suggestion is, in any case, a transparent, carefully worked out cover for her need to communicate. In mentioning marriage at all she reveals the depths of her frustrated life, showing that the romantic vision which she had once lived out through Judith is still alive. Even in the early pages of the book, the time-shifts become apparent. We are told, "It would be three hours yet before he would learn why she had sent for him".¹⁰⁴ This minor shift is soon followed by reminders of the major ellisions

in the book as we witness "what Sutpen's future and then unborn sister-in-law was to tell Quentin almost eighty years later".¹⁰⁵ The fragmentation of time mirrors the fragmentation of the story into pieces significant to each of the characters. Rosa focusses on Sutpen in relation to her family, the demon who caused their downfall. Mr. Compson focusses on Sutpen as he had learned to see him from his father, the intriguing, innocent and fated man.

Mr Compson always sounds very plausible. Compared to Rosa, he is at a sane distance from the events, with his father, General Compson, to lend credence to what he says. But, save when he is quoting the old man Mr. Compson tends to imbue the story with a sort of Gothic horror and morbid sexuality:

... he named them all (the nigger children) ... with his own mouth his own ironic fecundity of dragon's teeth. Only I have always liked to believe that he intended to name Clytie, Cassandra, prompted by some pure dramatic economy not only to beget but to disintegrate the presiding augur of his own disaster, and that he just got the name wrong through a mistake natural in a man who must almost have taught himself to read.¹⁰⁶

He is cynical in his apparent detachment, envisaging the people of the 'dead time' as 'more heroic, ... distinct, uncomplex' and the present generation as "diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled, author and victim too of a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements".¹⁰⁷ He creates and dwells, in loving detail, on the sensuous style of Charles Bon, on the apartments of the octroon mistress and is the first to suggest to Quentin that the relationship between Henry, Judith and Bon might have held some latent sexuality:

And it would be hard to say to which of them he appeared the more splendid - to the one with the hope ... of making the image hers through possession; to the other with the knowledge of the insurmountable barrier which the similarity of gender hopelessly intervened¹⁰⁸

Mr. Compson tends to extrapolate along very general lines, to infer in an almost voyeuristic fashion the passions hidden within the situation, without giving what he says any great thought or credence. We recall him in The Sound and The Fury floating similar broad, high-sounding ideas which served only to exacerbate Quentin's confusion. Thus, although he cannot be accused of Rosa's near-sighted over-dramatising, his private vision does distort the story, perhaps by being too long-sighted, placing it in the context of his own predilections.

Quentin takes his cue from his father but, as in The Sound and The Fury, he injects a great deal of emotion into the tale. His re-construction of the event undoubtedly involves a transference of his own, subjective feelings onto Henry and Bon. However, in doing this, he not only shifts the focus from the father to the sons, but also comes up with a credible explanation for the crucial mystery of why Sutpen forbade the marriage of Judith and why Henry killed Bon. Rosa views these events as proof of Sutpen's demonic nature. Mr. Compson cannot explain them, saying that Bon's octroon mistress, her child and the morganatic marriage were insufficient explanation for either the veto or the murder, that to accept them as such would be "drawing honor a little too fine even for the shadowy paragons which are our ancestors born in the South and come to man- and womanhood about eighteen-sixty or eighteen sixty-one".¹⁰⁹ In Quentin, we see the pressure from the public world, his heritage in which the names are myriad, the story as told by Rosa and by

Mr. Compson and his own private world interacting as a perfect prototype of the historical and psychological consciousness. As he tells it, the story contains seeds of the first three nourished by the disposition of the last and comes to be a new entity, with the emphasis shifted from the heroic deeds to the psychological motivations of the characters.

Just under half-way through the novel, Quentin begins to take part as a narrator. Up to this point, he had been merely listening to the recapitulations of Rosa and Mr. Compson, during the day on which Rosa sent for him and the evening before he rejoins her to go out to the house. The narrative shifts suddenly at this stage, moving forwards to when Quentin, now in Harvard, receives a letter from his father telling him of Miss Rosa's death. His room-mate, Shreve, at first recounts the story, which he has heard from Quentin and which, to Quentin's ears, sounds like a rehearsal of it by his father. He then takes over, beginning with the life led by Judith and Clytie after Sutpen's death until, together, they begin the reconstruction of the Henry-Judith triangle:

It was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (differences not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrases and usage of words), it might have been either of them and was in a sense both ... the two of them creating between them out of the rag-bag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere ...¹¹⁰

The presence of Shreve acts as a catalyst, forcing Quentin to face the fact that he has merely echoed his father's story and encouraging him to think about the motives of those involved. Together they embark on the recreation, reaching the stage where the cold in their Harvard

room and the cold of the battle-fields ridden over by Henry and Bon fuse, "So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark ...". In their version, Sutpen forbids the marriage because he finds out in New Orleans that Bon is his son. He is forced to tell Henry what the reason is, just before he goes to the war and so, for the next four years, the two young men fight both an external and an internal battle. Henry is faced with:

... incest of all things that might have been reserved for him, that all his heredity and training had to rebel against on principle and in a situation where he knew that neither incest nor training was going to help him solve it.¹¹²

The two hope that the war will settle the matter, that one or both of them will be killed. Shreve then goes on to assume, contrary to the authority of General Compson, that it was Henry and not Bon who was wounded and that Bon saved him when all he wished to do was die and be released from his private torment. Bon, driven by his hatred of Sutpen who refuses to recognise him, determines to marry Judith, forcing Henry, who can bear the incest but not the miscegenation, to kill him as, at the gates of Sutpen's Hundreds, he realises Bon is determined to go through with it.

Only at the very end do we discover what happened the evening on which the book began. Miss Rosa's apparently irrational idea that there was someone out at the Hundreds with Clytie and Jim Bond, Bon's idiot grandson, proves to be correct. Henry had come home to die. The scene leaves an indelible impression on Quentin, the shrunken figure in the bed feeding rather than quenching his imagination. Three months later, Miss Roas going out to the house to save Henry, finds the place ablaze. Clytie, believing that the town will lynch Henry for the

murder of Bon, creates a funeral pyre of the house, destroying the last white Sutpen and the edifice built to contain a dream.

The structure of the overall fictional reality in Absalom, Absalom! is as complex an amalgam of public and private worlds as any to be found in American literature. Each version of the story reveals a great deal about the private world of its narrator. The conjoint narration of Shreve and Quentin reflects the union of their private worlds; in extrapolating the story of Henry and Bon they are also exploring the nature of their own relationship and also, for the reader, presenting a picture of the historical consciousness at work. Sutpen's story grows organically, fed by the perceptions of the narrators and feeding upon them. For Miss Rosa, it is a focal point for her frustration as well as the cause of it; for Mr. Compson it is the affirmation of his cynical view of humanity as well as an inspirer of it. The influence of environment, the particular described by Chick Mallinson, is everywhere in evidence.

Faulkner's historical/psychological dimensions are clearly marked with gradations. For each of the three or four generations he deals with in his novels, there is an appropriate ethos. None are discreet but each is distinguishable from both its predecessors and successors. In Absalom, Absalom! all four are represented; Sutpen and his dream belong to the age of heroic action pre-dating the Civil War, General Compson belongs to the first emasculated generation, retaining many of the virtues of 'endurance and hardihood' in the face of defeat; Mr. Compson belongs to the second generation, resorting to words and the passive contemplations of decay, whilst Quentin is of the third, still passive, still emasculated but with a growing interest in the motivations

of the past rather than in its actions alone. When, in The Sound and the Fury, he finally takes refuge in the depths of his private world, he is doing no more than take the next logical step along the historical/psychological dimension.

Absalom, Absalom! is the 'apotheosis' of Faulkner's work. Within its pages he not only uses the historical/psychological dimensions but explores them, tests them to their uttermost, at the same time as straining the possibilities of fictional reality to its outer limit, conjuring with public and private worlds in a manner which makes nonsense of any talk of balance between them. The two are fused totally in this artistic magnum opus.

NOTES

1. William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1930), this ed., The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windos, 1970), p.12
2. As I Lay Dying, p. 163
3. As I Lay Dying, pp. 164-165
4. As I Lay Dying, p.76
5. As I Lay Dying, p.226
6. As I Lay Dying, p.101
7. As I Lay Dying, p.139
8. As I Lay Dying, p.72
9. As I Lay Dying, p.211
10. As I Lay Dying, p.196
11. As I Lay Dying, p.3
12. As I Lay Dying, p.25
13. As I Lay Dying, p.15
14. As I Lay Dying, p.166
15. As I Lay Dying, p.167
16. As I Lay Dying, p.165
17. As I Lay Dying, p.165
18. As I Lay Dying, p.166
19. As I Lay Dying, p.36
20. As I Lay Dying, p.20
21. As I Lay Dying, p.70
22. As I Lay Dying, p.41
23. As I Lay Dying, p.43
24. As I Lay Dying, p.44
25. William Faulkner, Light in August, 1st pub. Smith & Haas (New York, 1932), this ed., 2nd ed. (London: Chatto & Windos, 1960), p.15

26. Light in August, p.191
27. Light in August, p.321
28. Light in August, p.106
29. Light in August, p.266
30. Light in August, p.313
31. Light in August, p.280
32. Light in August, p.111
33. Light in August, p.264
34. Light in August, p.4
35. Light in August, p.6
36. Light in August, p.6
37. Light in August, p.26
38. Light in August, p.27
39. Light in August, p.69
40. Light in August, p.42
41. Light in August, p.272
42. Light in August, p.277
43. Light in August, p.277
44. Light in August, p.108
45. Light in August, p.107
46. Light in August, p.212
47. Light in August, p.246
48. Light in August, p.320
49. Light in August, p.241
50. Light in August, p.426
51. Light in August, p.325
52. Light in August, p.465
53. Light in August, p.44
54. William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1929), this ed., The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), p.176

55. Sound, p.74
56. Sound, p.74
57. Sound, p.68
58. Sound, p.115
59. Sound, p.147
60. Sound, p.127
61. Sound, p.174
62. Sound, p.168
63. Sound, pp. 105-6
64. Sound, p.89
65. Sound, p.84
66. Sound, p.79
67. Sound, p.38
68. Sound, p.18
69. Sound, p.4
70. Sound, p.66
71. Sound, p.46
72. Sound, p.58
73. Sound, pp.255-6
74. Sound, p.256
75. Sound, p.71
76. Sound, p.51
77. Sound, p.288
78. Sound, p.321
79. Sound, p.180
80. Sound, p.232
81. Sound, p.190
82. Sound, p.274
83. Sound, p.279

84. Sound, p.297
85. Sound, p.295
86. Sound, p.297
87. Sound, p.297
88. William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1936), this ed., The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p.8
89. Absalom, p.7
90. William Faulkner, Sartoris, 1st. pub. Harcoirt Brace (New York, 1929), this ed., The Collected Works (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p.1
91. Absalom, p.36
92. Absalom, p.246
93. Absalom, p.42
94. Absalom, p.43
95. Absalom, pp. 16-7
96. Absalom, p.166
97. Absalom, p.72
98. Absalom, p.19
99. Absalom, p.161
100. Absalom, p.182
101. Absalom, p.240
102. Absalom, p.171
103. Absalom, pp.9-10
104. Absalom, p.11
105. Absalom, p.34
106. Absalom, pp.61-2
107. Absalom, p.89
108. Absalom, p.95
109. Absalom, p.100
110. Absalom, p.303
111. Absalom, p.334
112. Absalom, p.340

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mary McCarthy, Vladimir Nabokov, Bernard Malamud,
John Barth and Saul Bellow

In moving from the works of William Faulkner to those discussed in this chapter, one leaves behind the possibility of a complete rapport between public and private worlds and enters an area where the fictional reality hinges upon a basic antipathy between the two. The works considered here are, with the exception of Herzog, set on and around college campuses but they have been selected less because their public worlds have something in common and more because they in various ways illustrate this antipathy. The Groves of Academe (1951) is the most limited in its aspirations. Mary McCarthy, like Edith Wharton, sets out to expose a certain microcosm, effectively shifting the emphasis from the private worlds of her characters to the pressures inflicted upon them by their chosen milieu. Randall Jarrell's Pictures From An Institution (1952) is, in a sense, a response to Miss McCarthy's criticisms (see below, p.375), providing the comic relief so lacking in her 'realistic' portrayal whilst, in a witty and urbane fashion, remaining critical of the microcosm itself. The relationship between the books is much like that of Myra Breckinridge and Magic and Myth of the Movies. Pnin (1957) is Vladimir Nabokov's contribution to the ranks of the campus novel, appealing in its obvious burlesque of the absent-minded professor, spiced, of course, with Nabokovian ambiguity, yet implicitly critical of the campus as a microcosm. Similarly, Pale Fire (1962) hides beneath its intricate surface with a serious comment on the nature of academic criticism and introduces the sort of highly disturbed private world which is a feature of the more cerebral campus novels. For the protagonist of The End of the Road (1967) the campus is a retreat from the wider public world with which he has so signally failed to cope. Jacob Horner is the comic

counterpart of Sy Levin, the would-be champion of Liberal Arts in Malamud's A New Life (1961) who tries and fails to attune himself to his environment. Herzog, coming from the microcosm of Downtown College, Chicago to the macrocosm of America, also fails to make any meaningful connections. Herzog (1961) is the definitive novel of this group, although its 'hero' is never actually seen on a campus.

From the last five novels named one can see emerging a faint but discernible basic pattern. Its crux is the disjunction of private and public worlds; Pnin, Horner, Kinbote, Levin and Herzog all lack the ability to comprehend or assimilate their environments. Pnin, ever on guard against disaster, is its constant plaything, Horner can operate only by means of the most monstrously mechanical of stratagems, Kinbote is lost in a maze of outrageous, megalomaniac fantasy, Levin seizes upon an illusion of romantic love and heroic but inappropriate action and Herzog, when not searching among the world views which succoured previous generations, lies uneasily upon a couch, the ambivalent emblem of psychoanalysis and repose.⁽¹⁾ The world which assaults and distorts these private worlds is most fully explored in Herzog.

(1) The psychoanalyst is never far from the side of the man who strives, in modern American fiction, to reconcile public and private worlds. Herzog and Horner both have their 'shrinks', Pnin is briefly married to one whilst Kinbote clearly has need of one. Nor is it just the distraught intellectual who is associated with analysts. Myra Breckinridge has her Dr. Montag, Alexander Portnoy his Dr. Spielvogel, Oedipa Maas (in Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49) her Dr. Hilarius and Allert, that second-rate Herzog in Hawkes's Death, Sleep and the Traveler, shares not only his problems but his wife with his psychiatrist. Whilst, in most cases, the analyst serves as a useful literary device, allowing the central character to lay bare his private world, he is potentially a more sinister figure. In both Ellison's Invisible Man and Burroughs's Junkie the passive listener becomes an active interferer, performing lobotomies in order to alter the basic disposition of the character's private world. See p.409 below for more detailed discussion of the role of the analyst in modern American fiction.

Moses E. Herzog is the itinerant academic who brings to his changing physical locations a breadth of vision and an awareness of man's potential which are of no use in face of the vast complexity of modern life. Like Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Herzog finds rationality, intellect and traditional wisdom rendered null and void by the chaos of actuality. This, in varying degrees, is true of all the major characters in the books considered here. Levin, Pnin and Horner all look to the campus for a sort of respite. Each is initially happy and optimistic in his humble teaching post, yet all are finally disillusioned and driven once more out into the wider world. The reasons for their failures vary, as do their expectations of their chosen environments, yet all encounter pettiness, internal politics and a rigid status quo. Thus, although priority is given to the private world of the central character it is worthwhile to speculate why these various authors, all university-level teachers themselves at some point in their careers, should choose to place their protagonists on the campuses of colleges, what role the campus plays in the American consciousness and how their portrayals of it relate to this role. What is it about the campus that attracts characters who lack cultural and social roots elsewhere in America, who are either psychologically disturbed or extremely eccentric and whose desire to succeed contains the seeds of self-destruction? Why should this group of authors, each highly aware of the novel as a form, choose to structure their fictional realities not merely around private worlds but around the private worlds of bachelor academics aged between thirty and forty-five years who teach in small county campuses and not in the more typical city centre institutions? What does the conjunction of these particular public and private worlds signify?

Mary McCarthy, although she may not have written a particularly successful novel, is a careful compiler of facts and The Groves of Academe may be relied upon to stress all the salient features of the campus as public world. Henry Mulcahy, her personally repellent yet academically respectable protagonist, decides that his dismissal from Jocelyn College is the result of youthful, political indiscretion and hopes to evade it by appealing to the 'liberal' sentiments of his colleagues, to translate his personal plight into a matter of academic freedom. Jocelyn College, being progressive and experimental, demanding no loyalty oath or anything else which might be construed as violating academic freedom, contains "a permanent minority of principled dissenters".¹ Mulcahy finds, however, that when appealed to individually, these 'dissenters' tend to give way to conformist pressures, "None of them, including the participants, would know what they thought of this matter till the winner had been certified".² Through double-dealing and sheer determination, Mulcahy survives, forcing the President of the college to resign in his stead in order that the college's name for liberalism and progressiveness may survive. What Miss McCarthy does is show the insidious effect which the campaign waged by her namesake, Senator McCarthy, upon the intellectuals of America had in the colleges and Universities. As Robert Nisbet says, McCarthy's enemies "were almost strictly and exclusively the intellectuals of this country, academic intellectuals especially".³ As one can see in The Groves of Academe, this fear of communism working against the notion of academic freedom tends to produce an atmosphere of mutual suspicion antipathetic to freedom of mind and academic excellence. These same pressures evince themselves in A New Life. In the first meeting with Fairchild, Levin is told the story of Duffy and warned against not only communism but womanising and drinking too. Even in those novels less concerned with the actual pressures at work

within campuses, one cannot escape the fact that faculties and departments are very tight-knit, inward-looking communities whose tolerance for individuality and eccentricity is strictly limited and whose members spend a great deal of time watching each other.

Although the campuses in the novels discussed here are widely separated geographically, from the ultra-conservative Cascadia College, fifty miles from the Pacific in the north-west, through Jocelyn in Pennsylvania, Waindell in Maine or New Hampshire to Wicomico State Teachers College, Maryland, the internal organisation of their departments are strikingly alike. Perhaps because the protagonists are all teachers of English, they tend to enter microcosms which love to gossip and tend to mythologize themselves. Gertrude Johnson's one perceptive comment about living around colleges making people 'lose their sense of the probable' rings true for all the novels. Like the students at Buck Loner's Academy, the Department members are apt to resolve themselves into a predictable 'cast', status and appearance rather than personality dictating their actions and attitudes. Just as Duffy has been assimilated into the verbal tradition of the place before the arrival of Levin, so we feel Levin will also be assimilated after his departure, used as Another Awful Warning of the dangers of nonconformity, a sort of Demon king. Mulcahy exploits this, deliberately starting stories confident that "in the telling and the response the story became a living thing - the joint possession of the group".⁴ The campus counterpart of Faulkner's verbal tradition is dealt with most subtly and thoroughly in Pnin. It is only at the end of the novel that the reader, who has been encouraged to laugh at Jack Cockrell, the head of English, and his limited repertoire of 'Pnin' stories, realises that what he has been subjected to is merely a rehearsal of

the myth by Pnin's successor out of Cockrell. Pictures From An Institution likewise consists largely of 'gossip', compiled and adumbrated by a malicious and witty narrator who is also a member of the English Faculty.

In almost all the novels, the self-mythologising bent of the extant inhabitants is used to make them appear faintly ludicrous or even downright comic. Waindell boasts Professor Blorengé, the Head of French Literature who 'disliked literature and had no French', the angelic Starrs who teach Fine Art, Clements whose major concern is the Philosophy of Gesture, etc. This worthy group receives grants to farther knowledge of such fascinating areas as 'the eating habits of Cuban fishermen and palm climbers' and sends emissaries to all manner of conferences, where they treat their own ineptitudes as if 'they were some majestic whim'. All in all, Nabokov's attitude to the institutions of Higher Education is a little less than reverent:

And still the College creaked on. Hard-working graduates, with pregnant wives, still wrote dissertations on Dostoevski and Simone de Beauvoir. Literary departments still labored under the impression that Stendhal, Galsworthy, Dreiser, and Mann were great writers. Word plastics like "conflict" and "pattern" were still in vogue. As usual, sterile instructors successfully endeavored to "produce" by reviewing the books of more fertile colleagues, ...⁵

No less comic are the academics of Benton, ranging as they do from Miss Batterson, the elderly gentlewoman whose course on creative writing is based on 'an elder classic' called How To Write Short Stories and who rates aesthetic discriminations with racial discrimination to Dr. Rosenbaum, with his love of 'hither-to unthought of, thereafter unthinkable' combinations of instruments. Benton also boasts one

within campuses, one cannot escape the fact that faculties and departments are very tight-knit, inward-looking communities whose tolerance for individuality and eccentricity is strictly limited and whose members spend a great deal of time watching each other.

Although the campuses in the novels discussed here are widely separated geographically, from the ultra-conservative Cascadia College, fifty miles from the Pacific in the north-west, through Jocelyn in Pennsylvania, Waindell in Maine or New Hampshire to Wicomico State Teachers College, Maryland, the internal organisation of their departments are strikingly alike. Perhaps because the protagonists are all teachers of English, they tend to enter microcosms which love to gossip and tend to mythologize themselves. Gertrude Johnson's one perceptive comment about living around colleges making people 'lose their sense of the probable' rings true for all the novels. Like the students at Buck Loner's Academy, the Department members are apt to resolve themselves into a predictable 'cast', status and appearance rather than personality dictating their actions and attitudes. Just as Duffy has been assimilated into the verbal tradition of the place before the arrival of Levin, so we feel Levin will also be assimilated after his departure, used as Another Awful Warning of the dangers of nonconformity, a sort of Demon king. Mulcahy exploits this, deliberately starting stories confident that "in the telling and the response the story became a living thing - the joint possession of the group".⁴ The campus counterpart of Faulkner's verbal tradition is dealt with most subtly and thoroughly in Pnin. It is only at the end of the novel that the reader, who has been encouraged to laugh at Jack Cockrell, the head of English, and his limited repertoire of 'Pnin' stories, realises that what he has been subjected to is merely a rehearsal of

the myth by Pnin's successor out of Cockrell. Pictures From An Institution likewise consists largely of 'gossip', compiled and adumbrated by a malicious and witty narrator who is also a member of the English Faculty.

In almost all the novels, the self-mythologising bent of the extant inhabitants is used to make them appear faintly ludicrous or even downright comic. Waindell boasts Professor Blorengé, the Head of French Literature who 'disliked literature and had no French', the angelic Starrs who teach Fine Art, Clements whose major concern is the Philosophy of Gesture, etc. This worthy group receives grants to farther knowledge of such fascinating areas as 'the eating habits of Cuban fishermen and palm climbers' and sends emissaries to all manner of conferences, where they treat their own ineptitudes as if 'they were some majestic whim'. All in all, Nabokov's attitude to the institutions of Higher Education is a little less than reverent:

And still the College creaked on. Hard-working graduates, with pregnant wives, still wrote dissertations on Dostoevski and Simone de Beauvoir. Literary departments still labored under the impression that Stendhal, Galsworthy, Dreiser, and Mann were great writers. Word plastics like "conflict" and "pattern" were still in vogue. As usual, sterile instructors successfully endeavored to "produce" by reviewing the books of more fertile colleagues, ...⁵

No less comic are the academics of Benton, ranging as they do from Miss Batterson, the elderly gentlewoman whose course on creative writing is based on 'an elder classic' called How To Write Short Stories and who rates aesthetic discriminations with racial discrimination to Dr. Rosenbaum, with his love of 'hither-to unthought of, thereafter unthinkable' combinations of instruments. Benton also boasts one

Dr. Whittaker, the scientist who "talked the way a sentence would talk - as he spoke, English seemed to have been dead for many centuries".⁶ Less overtly funny are the teachers at Cascadia, Fabrikant the 'scholar' who lives in the style of a Southern gentleman, works in the most conservative of institutions and is engaged in writing on 'Liberalism in American Education', Gilley who, in his eagerness to teach, abandons all attempts to pursue the academic promise he showed by once having an article in the PMLA, Bucket with his thrice-refused thesis on Sterne and his half-built house and Professor Fairchild, whose Elementary Grammar Texts are symptomatic of a concern with the functional side of English teaching and of life. Even in The Groves of Academe, with its unmistakable pretensions to 'realism', the academics are more concerned with individual status and internal politics than with ideas. It is perhaps part of Miss McCarthy's case that the influence of the outside world, in the form of politics, should be seen to militate against intellectual excellence, but nowhere in the ranks of her stereotyped characters is this excellence even faintly discernible. Mulcahy is a small-town Machiavelli, adept at playing on the weaknesses of both his colleagues and his students with a variety of clichéd techniques; Domna Rejnev, the Liberated-Expatriot-Intellectual-Women, is an idealist of sorts but is easy prey for Mulcahy; Furness, head of English, is an Elder Cynic and sterile perfectionist, "extremely sensitive to any disarray in the outer garment of reality"⁷ and Aristotle Poncey the inevitable Unwordly-Old-World-Professor.

Thus all the novels, whether realistic or comic, disabuse the reader of any notion of academic excellence and expose the campus as a microcosm riddled with human frailty, trivial, inward-looking, conformist and prey to external pressures. In The Degradation of the Academic Dogma,

Robert Nisbet maintains that the college or university has become the essence of the American's dream for his children, "I believe no people has ever lived that has more pride in the idea of college and university, however naively expressed at times, than the American people".⁸ Arguing that what he regards as a crisis in higher education stems largely from the failure of the university to become 'truly modern', attempting as it does to maintain an outward show of superiority and an internal organisation that is 'quasi-medieval, characteristically aristocratic', Nisbet lends factual conviction to what, in the novels, emerges as an excessive concern with other inhabitants of the campus microcosm, with their moral and political, but not their academic, standards. One has only to look at how the Presidents of the various colleges are portrayed to see that, although most of the novelists are concerned with the private worlds of their central characters rather than with the disposition of the public worlds in which they take refuge, they are, nevertheless, aware that all is not well in the state of the campus.

In The Higher Learning in America: A Reassessment, Paul Woodring observes that no academic willingly takes upon himself the more highly paid but less secure job of President when he has any hopes of becoming a full Professor via a Departmental Headship. These failed or frustrated academics are represented in the novels very much as 'front men', toeing the conformist line whilst their underlings remain relatively free to express themselves. Maynard Hoar, President of Jocelyn, "the photogenic, curly-haired evangelist of the right to teach, leader of torch parades against the loyalty oath ...",⁹ ultimately has to resign as the result of Mulcahy's manipulations of the progressive pose. Mulcahy succeeds in perverting the worthy cause of academic/political

freedom, making it into a cover for his own personal weaknesses and using it to secure his own position. Dwight Robbins, Jarrell's Hoar, consults the catalogue of Opinions of Presidents of Liberal Arts Colleges before committing himself to anything, is "so well adjusted to his environment that sometimes you could not tell which was environment and which was President Robbins"¹⁰ and believes whatever it is expedient for him, as President, to believe. Fancying himself as a latter-day Gatsby, this ex-diving champion with the 'boyish' good-looks has neither Ph.D. nor teaching experience. He is the complete, caricature cypher, about as effectual as President Poore of Waindell, who moves 'with antique dignity' through his private darkness. Marion Labhart, President of Cascadia College is more potent. In fact, he is a complete reactionary, denouncing Duffy amid public histrionics and figuring, in Levin's imagination, as the equivalent of Hawthorne's preacher, "Levin had a sulphurous vision of himself as Arthur Dimmesdale Levin ... as President Labhart stood over him, preaching a hell-fire sermon denouncing communist adulterers".¹¹ No roll of fictional Presidents could be complete without mention of Bledsoe, that outwardly most subservient yet actually most powerful of men who runs the state college for Negroes to which Ellison's Invisible Man is sent:

I's big and black and I say "Yes, suh" as loudly as any burr-head when it's convenient, but I'm still king down here. I don't care how much it appears otherwise. Power doesn't have to show off. ... When you buck against me you're bucking against power, rich white folk's power, the nation's power - which means government power!¹²

That the black equivalent of the effete white President should have the potency and political insight to manipulate the situation to his own advantage is but one of the ironies in which Ellison delights. It is Bledsoe who starts the Invisible Man on his journey, bearing the

'recommendation' 'Keep This Nigger Boy Running'. Like Levin, the Invisible Man brings to the campus certain ideals; expecting to learn the most acceptable form of servitude, the road to second-rate success, he is given a lesson in harsh political realities, just as Levin, hoping to teach Liberal Arts and revive an ideal or two, finds himself hounded by the narrow-minded and the demands of political expediency.

As a public world, the campus is seen to be curiously isolated, a community not of like-minded individuals but of willing conformists. Levin, Pnin and Horner all enter situations where the norms are well defined, in spite of the overt eccentricities of individual members. These norms are for the most part highly conservative, with stringency and simplicity being substituted for the sorts of tacit understandings by which, for example, Faulknerian worlds operate. This immediate accessibility leads either, in the case of Mulcahy, to ease of exploitation, or, in the case of Levin and Horner and Pnin, to a failure to accept such simple mores. Under the impact of these nonconformists, the public world inevitably shows some sign of strain, its synthetic codes being inflexible and shallow-rooted. Mulcahy exposes the folly of the 'professional progressive', Levin the narrow-mindedness of Cascadia, Pnin the self-mythologising bent and Horner the weakness of the wonder-boy, Morgan.

Without exception, the campuses as physical locations attempt to cover their lack of true identity with an artificial, clichéd 'academic' gloss. Jocelyn is 'picturesque', with "a group of long, thick-walled, mansarded, white-shuttered stone dwellings arranged around a cupolaed chapel with a planting of hemlock",¹³ whilst Waindell boasts an artificial lake, ivied galleries and "murals displaying recognisable

members of the faculty in the act of passing the torch of knowledge from Aristotle, Shakespeare and Pasteur to a lot of monstrously built farm boys and farm girls".¹⁴ The campus of Cascadia, with its grey clapboard Humanities Hall adorned by a 'pediment-roofed porch', strikes Levin as being out of tune with the natural beauty of the surroundings. Wicomico State Teachers College too is incongruous in its surroundings, sitting 'in a great flat open field', "its physical plant consisted of a single graceless brick building with two ells, a building too large for the pseudo-Georgian style in which it is constructed".¹⁵ Benton demonstrates this aspiration after assumed academic architectural glory in its most extreme form:

Half the campus was designed by Bottom the Weaver, half by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe; Benton had been endowed with one to begin with, and had smiled and sweated and spoken for the other. A visitor looked under black beams, through leaded casements (past apple boughs, past box, past chairs like bath-tubs on broomsticks) to a lawn ornamented with one of the statues of David Smith ...¹⁶

The setting, in Invisible Man, has less comic potential. A 'venerable' building, overgrown with ivy and wisteria, it seems to the innocent protagonist the acme of rustic simplicity. Only in such details as the white Home Economics building and the black powerhouse, the rustic bridge upon which trysts may never take place and the statue of the Founder, caught forever in an ambivalent gesture of either raising or lowering a veil over the head of a kneeling Negro, does one discern the dark irony in the description. The whole campus is a mock-up, designed to deny the fact that the 'tradition' of educating the Negro is of recent birth and dubious paternity.

These spurious academics working in settings which bear little or no

relation to the traditional architecture of their surroundings are, in some ways, reminiscent of the inmates of Hollywood. As Woodring says, "the academic man does not fit neatly into the American structure of social classes as described by sociologists".¹⁷ This would seem to be confirmed by these novels. The groups which gather in places modelled upon some vague notion of what is architecturally appropriate are seen to have firmly established behavioural patterns which they defend against the incomer, just as the 'old' Hollywood inhabitants close ranks against the person who does not enact any of the available 'roles' in the manner tacitly prescribed. It is in The Groves of Academe that one finds the nature of the campus as public world most fully explored. Miss McCarthy makes no attempt to conceal the propagandist aim of her novel, attacking progressive education, liberalism, faculty members and students with the aid of fact, and the merest suggestion of fiction:

Jocelyn College, on this mid-morning in January, as Henry Mulcahy trod softly through its corridors, had a faculty of forty-one persons and a student body of two-hundred and eighty-three ... a ratio of one teacher to every 6.9 students, which made possible the practice of 'individual instruction' as carried on at Bennington (6:1), Sarah Lawrence (6.4:1), Bard (6.9:1) and St. John's (7.7:1). It had been founded in the late thirties by an experimental educator and lecturer, backed by a group of society women¹⁸

No doubt of some interest to the cognoscenti and those partaking of the obsession with student ratios, such passages as these, with their scant fictional gloss, make the reader feel that Miss McCarthy is guilty of abusing the form of the novel after the fashion of Dreiser, Norris et al. The dreary and verbose relevance of such 'factoidal' conglomerates to the plot is not sufficient justification for their inclusion in this particular way. The actual public world is present in an almost

unprecedented manner, disrupting the meagre attempts at creating a fictional reality, attempts which are hindered by an uneven style and an abundance of parentheses. Like Lewis, in Main Street, Miss McCarthy relies for effect on the controversiality of her facts and the sensational nature of her presentation rather than on the complex conjuring with a multitude of components.

Her novels are not, however, without their defenders. One, Doris Grumbach, authoress of a 'critical' biography entitled The Company She Kept, goes so far as to maintain that the novels themselves are good and the adverse criticism bad. This neat inversion would seem to reflect the attitude of Miss McCarthy herself, who is said to refer to her critics as 'enemies'. Indeed, there is so marked a similarity between the preoccupations of the two ladies and their style of writing that, were one a hardened cynic like Howard Furness, one might suspect 'biography' lacks a vital prefix. Miss Grumbach deals at length with the relationship between Miss McCarthy and Randall Jarrell's Pictures From An Institution, observing, en route to an ambiguous conclusion:

The world at large knows what Mary McCarthy thought of Bard and, more explicitly, is aware of her lack of respect for students, faculty, curriculum and general climate of Sarah Lawrence. What she was like on the campus of Sarah Lawrence, what her colleagues thought of her, can only be surmised from one piece of possible evidence, this is a novel by the late Randall Jarrell . . . Jarrell . . . taught at Sarah Lawrence, Mary McCarthy knew him although he was not at Sarah Lawrence at the same time as she was. Yet her detractors are united in their view that Gertrude in that novel is the spit and image of Mary McCarthy.¹⁹

Far removed from the ranks of her detractors, Miss Grumbach nevertheless concedes that, "Gertrude does seem to gather together under one skin many views of Mary McCarthy that have been expressed by 'enemies'",²⁰ and even goes on to say that Pictures From An Institution was a

'literary jest' Jarrell 'was making to Mary McCarthy'.

The world divides into - Gertrude had read - fact, and facts were what Gertrude knew. ... All clichés, slogans, fashions, turns of speech, details of dress, disguises of affection, tunnels or by-passes of ideology, gravestones of rationalization and cant lived in Gertrude as though in nutrient broth; and Gertrude nourished them unharmed, knowing all, believing none.²¹

Whether or not Gertrude is Mary, this criticism would seem to apply with equal validity to both authoresses. It might be said in defence of Miss McCarthy that she is attempting to deal with profound and complex issues, but the violence which she does to the form of the novel is not excusable. If the issues are so complex that she, like Dreiser, must 'instruct' her readers then she would have been better advised to use a factual rather than a fictional form, as she has done of late with Vietnam. Like Mulcahy, she exploits the 'status quo', the form of the novel, without any regard to the damage she may do and, like Lewis, she has written a book which will lose all merit once the issues it relies on for impact are dead.

Pictures From An Institution, written one year after The Groves (1951), has more staying power. Jarrell, through the medium of his 'bitchy' narrator, portrays the campus as a species of menagerie. The novel is divided into seven chapters, each dealing with some of the inmates and their relationship to Gertrude Johnson, novelist and teacher of creative writing. Gertrude, we are told, does not know what it is to be 'a human being', experiencing no emotion save in relation to her captive husband and audience, Sydney, who is rewarded with a display of 'anomalous and rudimentary good-nature'.²² His wife's books, whose dust-jacket references to him are the only proof of his existence,

succeed with people tired of the complexities of life. She, with her simplified, unimaginative and unemotional outlook, makes life seem understandable; 'life and death', 'men and women' become, in her hands, "no more than the systematic, verifiable abstractions of some galactic Mechanism".²³ Creation she regards as temptation, the negative side of fact, yet because Benton is 'not only loveless, but plotless', she is obliged to create a plot, following her tenet that one must give form to life, and plot is form. Benton is translated into "a giant nursery of facts, facts that would cover with their academic ivy of verisimilitude the girders of a plot that would have supported the First National Bank".²⁴ Gertrude's novels are hailed by the experimentalists, not because they are experimental but because her moral certainty and clarity of vision ('nothing was ever what it seemed') appear strikingly original in an age assailed by doubts.

The case against Gertrude is overstated with such glorious abandon and such minutely detailed thoroughness that one begins to have some doubts about the trustworthiness of the narrator, himself a would-be writer of poetry. His omniscience, his imputations of doubts, dreams and feelings to Gertrude is not evidence that he knows her very well but rather proof that he is a prime mover in Benton's defence against her intrusion. By mythologising Gertrude in this way, he hopes both to deflect her fire and to draw some attention to himself as raconteur:

I generally agreed with Gertrude; the rest of the time I never seemed to say anything. Someone has said about people: 'Let us act as if they were real; who knows, perhaps they are'. I never made this mistake with Gertrude. Men go thousands of miles to see the Grand Canyon: to look down into Gertrude, I was willing to pay and be silent.²⁵

This inadvertent admission that he played the sycophant, coupled with the irrelevant introduction of the Grand Canyon, finally shakes our faith in the narrator. Jarrell is amusing at the expense of Gertrude, and those of her ilk, who need facts to pervert into fictions, and at the expense of those members of the academic fraternity who, like the narrator, allow their awareness of the fictionally possible to take charge of their perspective on the 'actual' and who inevitably end up in the realms of self-mythologising. Intent on reducing all around to the broad outlines of caricature, the narrator fails to notice that much of what he says is self-revelatory. From reading between the lines we know that he hung around Gertrude in hopes of picking up a bon mot or two and that professional jealousy cannot be ruled out as the inspiration for his account of her visit.

Thus, the pivot of the fictional reality in the novel is neither the public world of Benton, nor even Gertrude Johnson, but the private world of the narrator. Just as he parodies his colleagues, so Jarrell parodies him. He belongs, with Cockerell, Gilley and Morgan, to the ranks of those who mythologise their little microcosms, apparently unaware that they too are stereotypes in the narrow and often absurd world of the college. Their lack of awareness leads them to embrace their stereotypes, as Babbitt did, with the important difference that he, at least, was genuinely motivated to achieve the norm. In this case, the norm is less easily defined. It does not consist of material objects, or even the membership of certain groups, but the adoption of roles equally hedged about by appropriate opinions and moral stances, a sort of certified eccentricity within a very limited and jealously watchful group whose outward liberality thinly covers its basic conservatism. One might even go so far as to suggest that the

campus, as represented in The Groves of Academe, A New Life, Pictures From An Institution and The End of the Road, is the last outpost of the Main Street mentality, a collection of people whose homogeneity depends on the continuance of certain narrow, arbitrary views of the world and on conformity. As we see in Herzog, in Mr. Sammler's Planet, in Invisible Man, as well as in the excursions which Pnin and Levin make away from their campuses, the wider public world, lacking this or any other definable organisation, is antipathetic to the individual private world. In electing to write novels set on campuses, Barth, Nabokov, Malamud and Jarrell are not, as Leslie A. Fielder suggests, continuing an 'incestuous tradition'. Fielder says that the college novel is "usually a book about the writer himself in his role as college professor, and as such has failure as its subject".²⁶ What Mr. Fielder overlooks is the fact that, whilst Pnin, Horner and Levin all fail, they do so as the result of their failure to adapt to limited public worlds, and that this failure is not seen as the laudable result of the creative intelligence clashing with the Establishment. It is born of private weakness and so cannot be regarded as reflecting either well or ill upon the actual teaching experiences of the authors. The campus is a manageable public world within which the problems of the individual private world can be explored without the intrusion of vast, external complexities. Although the dispositions of the private worlds of the protagonists in such novels may be traced back to the sorts of experiences undergone by Herzog, it is the present disposition and not the past experience which is the central focus.

Sy Levin, "formerly a drunkard, ... bearded, fatigued, lonely",²⁷ comes to Cascadia College bearing the seeds of his own destruction. Hoping at last to fulfil a life-long dream, presented with a few routine

teaching tasks, asked to join in the non-too-active social life and show an interest in the great outdoors, Levin fails only through too strenuous effort to succeed. He is driven by the perverse desire for greater understanding and by a few ideals salvaged from what, one gathers, was a disastrous former life, to dig ever deeper into the shallow depths of his new social scene. The shade of Leo Duffy, an explicit warning of all that is unacceptable, is kept constantly before his eyes. Seeing yet imperceptive, he heads towards ever closer identification with his predecessor.

He went on although advising himself not to. 'My life, if I may say, had been without much purpose to speak of. Some blame the times for that, I blame myself. The times are bad but I've decided I'll have no other'. He laughed immoderately and stopped abruptly. After a minute's silence he went on, 'In the past I cheated myself and killed my choices'. Levin mopped his brow. 'Now that I can - ah - move again I hope to make better use - of things. ... I've reclaimed an old ideal or two', Levin said awkwardly. 'They give a man his value if he stands for them.'²⁸

Such ill-judged garrulity as this is part of the self-destructive Levinian pattern. He is correct in apportioning blame to himself rather than to the age or to any external force, although, from the manner in which he brings about his own downfall, one might almost believe there to be some malignant Fate at work. Not only does Levin say too much, as here, but the ideals to which he clings remain rigid in face of the most overwhelming obstacles. Finding that he has mistakenly applied to the wrong Cascadia, to the College which limits its teaching to 'bonehead grammar' rather than the State College where they teach Liberal Arts, Levin determines to change the status quo, telling Joe Bucket, one of his superiors, "I feel I am engaged in a great irrelevancy, teaching people how to write who do not know what to write. I can give them subjects but not subject matter. I worry

I am not teaching how to keep civilisation from destroying itself".²⁹

There is some comedy inherent in this 'man with a mission' and his arrival in Cascadia. The status quo is designed to protect the staff in their rural idyll. Because it takes 'fifty years to grow a tree' they feel justified in remaining static, producing agriculturalists and technologists, removed from all political controversy by their communal will, "At Cascadia College, the American fear manifested itself, paradoxically, in what was missing: ideas, serious criticism, a liberal position".³⁰ Levin, all-unknowingly, motivated only by his principles, proceeds to become the stereotype enemy, treading in the footsteps of Duffy not only in terms of political unrest, but in his choice of mistress. The irony is, in one way, bitter indeed. Levin is so sincere in his desire both to reform and to fall in love that one cannot help but feel pity for him whilst, at the same time, enjoying the spectacle of this unlikely Romantic idealist grappling with his own worst enemy, himself. Hoping to create a new life, he finds that he is merely following in the footsteps of another, even being selected by his future mistress on the basis of his resemblance to her former lover, Levin's predecessor. In his eagerness to make up for lost time, to beat the world and his life into shape with his revived ideals he is, ironically, only wasting time and life. He seems unaware that the world is a shared oyster.

Although the political pressures inherent in the campus situations are well-documented in the novel, as are the hierarchic internal structure of the college, its relation to its students and its spurious social unity, such matters are not of prime importance. These 'realistic' details serve as a counterpoint to the essentially Romantic reactions

of Levin to Cascadia, to his insensitive blunderings among Departmental politics and to his indiscretions with female students and others' wives. Essentially an urban man, Levin responds to Nature in a perceptive, emotional way, enjoying the rhythm of the seasons, the shape of the trees and the scents where other members of the Department merely utilise the outdoors as an arena in which to pursue their public pursuits in the prescribed manner. The book is carefully structured and Levin, wandering through the wood which he mistakes for a forest, a little afraid but lyrically stimulated, mirrors Levin progressing through the Department, failing to see the 'wood' for the 'trees' of his principles. He lacks a sense of proportion, his responses are, in both cases, those of the ingenuous rookie and, much as one appreciates that both his lyricism and his idealism are intrinsically valuable, one cannot but deplore the fact that his qualities are not allied to a practical apprehension of the demands of the public world in which he wishes to succeed. Malamud is not intent on apportioning blame. Flawed though the public world of Cascadia undoubtedly is by excessive conservatism and spurious good-fellowship, it is no more flawed than the private world of its would-be saviour.

This balance is apparent throughout the book. Just as Cascadia is never allowed to become too despicable, so Levin is prevented from becoming either too appealingly Romantic or too pitiable. A man who steals the willing waitress from under the nose of his fellow-lodger deserves to endure a near-naked walk through the town where he hopes to become a respected citizen. Malamud allows his character to be the ever-unaware creator of the tragi-comic level which, at times, resides in the limbo between Levin's private world of hopes and the actualities of the public world at others in the gulf between intention and action.

The latter applies particularly to Levin's sexual exploits. Malamud strikes a very fine balance between the moving and the funny by allowing his central character to suffer and to succeed in a manner limited by the ironies of the situation, ironies which are usually of the latter's own creation. Only when the private anguish of Levin threatens to become so great that he may appear wholly tragic does Malamud intervene. Having made the heroic decision to abandon Pauline and seeming, in his loneliness and despair, to be entrapped in a private world of tragedy, Levin is made less moving by attracting the undying devotion of his landlady's cat.

Levin, however, must bear final responsibility for the ironies which limit his situation. It is, after all, not necessary that he fall in love with Pauline Gilley, the wife of his superior. Arriving 'black-hatted, bearded Levin, unwed instructor, famished for love and willing to marry',³¹ it is not necessary that he depart beardless, out of love, unwilling but fated to marry Pauline Gilley, she of the 'lank frame, comic tootsies, nose flying, chest bereft of female flowers', with "the burden of her ambient: prior claimant, husband-in-law; the paraphernalia of her married life",³² not to mention her children and their assorted, expensive ailments. Levin the Romantic has an unsurpassed ability to suffer his way to the worst possible of conclusions, seeing Love and not guilt as the source of his post-coital pain, and Levin the Idealist remains oblivious to the most obvious, simplest of courses of action. Instead of waiting until he has slowly established a position of some power within the Department, he immediately tries to bring about changes, even going so far as to stand for the Headship of the Department, an act whose astounding lack of tact and judgement can only be explained in terms of his private dream of teaching Liberal Arts.

... the good people of the town inspired to communal gratitude would parade him up and down Main Street amid Lions, Elks, Women of the Moose, ... cheers, tears, and a brass band. Levin, benefactor, Cultural Hero, Seymour P. Bunyanseed, Fautor et Cultor Bonorum, American Patriot! He had to pinch himself to leave off.³³

Even Levin realises that this vision is ridiculous. What he does not realise is that it differs from his other visions only in degree and not in kind. He has no fixed definition of the new self to go with the new life and he is, therefore, as susceptible to the wildest of imaginings as to the most practical of schemes. The public world does not enter into his calculations, save as the vague object of his messianic mission, but it does enter in fact, deflating him and driving him to the edges of despair. To prevent the book from slipping over the borders of pathos into tragedy, Malamud maintains a tragi-comic level with Levin's ineptitudes, his glorious visions and his slap-stick routines with Avis and the Dean. Yet ultimately, Levin is pathetic. The difficulty he finds in relating to the public world, evident in almost all his actions, is summed up by his laughter.

Laughter for Levin is never the sound of genuine mirth but a stifled social signal. He 'aborts mad snickers', 'laughs hollowly', 'fabricates cracked smiles', and so on, finally concluding that, "He laughed seriously and suffered merrily, miserere".³⁴ He knows that he is 'his own bad cause', but he is not willing to compromise his dream in the interests of achieving it. Having discerned in Levin heroic qualities, a largesse d'esprit which makes Cascadia seem parochial and cramped, a willingness to abandon himself to the Romantic pull of Nature and an eagerness to give himself, both intellectually and emotionally, to others we must, nevertheless reject him as a failure.

These qualities become translated into a fatal lack of identity, or rather, of connection with the public world. It is as antipathetic to Levin as Levin is to it; public and private worlds are incompatible and the qualities of each become irrelevant in face of this mutual failure. The impractical, absurd yet touching vision of Levin highlights the flaws in the rigid, artificial world of Cascadia just as it, with its simple, self-preserving codes throws Levin's self-destructiveness into high relief.

Thus, the overall fictional reality is structured in such a way that, whilst public and private worlds remain distinct entities, neither stands condemned. Malamud's purpose is not simply condemnatory. The book works on many levels; the ironic awareness so fundamental to its design is supplied by the author, who deepens the irony by making his character follow in Duffy's footsteps, mistake a wood for a forest, literally place other members of the Department in the positions in which, metaphorically, he leaves them and so on. Levin, whose taste for irony is somewhat jaded, in his determination to make something different of his new life is, however, the creator of the ironies. A sort of latter-day Don Quixote, he performs in a parody of idealism and romanticism à l'Americaine. Cascadia, for him, is the frontier, the land of hope where all things are made new. Facing his students, he feels that, "They represented the America he had so often hear of, the fabulous friendly West".³⁵ Of course, their reactions are not born of intellectual enthusiasm, or even friendliness, but of the natural, diverse feelings of a group addressed by an unzipped enthusiast. His espousal of the 'cause' of Liberal Arts is also based on a misconception, this time about the nature of education. Envisaging himself as a pedagogue teaching people how to 'save civilisation',

he seems unaware that "the tidal wave of adulation for the liberal arts that rolled over academia at about the same time that the new capitalism was threatening the structure of the university" is but a political gesture, not a new path to cultural salvation. Levin's ideals are illusory. He, like Herzog, is too late to save either the world or himself.

Jacob Horner, protagonist of Barth's novel The End of the Road, entertains illusions of another sort. He is in no way concerned with the salvation of the public world, being too busy trying to keep his private world in some sort of working order. Ostensibly, he has much in common with Sy Levin. Both are bachelors, both arrive at the outset to take up teaching posts, both have affairs with the wives of colleagues which result in unwelcome proof of their fertility and both have somewhat obtuse relationships with the public world. It is this last 'similarity' which denies the close comparison suggested by the rest, for, whatever else it may do, Horner's interaction with his environment discomfits the would-be analyst and critic. How does one deal with a fictional reality based, coherently and cleverly, on the protagonist's lack of consistency, with a novel in which the analysis is already performed by character and psychiatrist, the critical comments included in the narrative of the ever-alert Horner?

It seems to me just this moment that, should you choose to consider that final observation as a metaphor, it is the story of my life in a sentence - to be precise, in the latter member of a double predicative nominative expression in the second independent clause of a rather intricate compound sentence.⁵⁷

Horner is, of course, quite correct, both grammatically and in his prediction that the reader will choose to regard the sentence as a

metaphor; the observation that, "when one is faced with such a multitude of desirable choices, no one choice seems satisfactory for very long when compared with the aggregate desirability of all the rest, though compared to any one of the others, it would not be found inferior"³⁸ is an apt metaphor for his life. The critical bloodhound who finds such a juicy morsel as this thrust into his mouth can take no pride in having retrieved it from the text. The manner in which the observation is described is more than a reflection of Horner's role as grammar teacher. In the extremity of its 'analysis', it makes mock of ours.

Nor does the matter rest there. The second quotation might well be a double-bladed metaphor, applying with equal validity both to Horner's relationship to life and to the reader's relationship to the text. Prolonged analysis of very trivial movements, denoting self-consciousness, in the Progress and Advice Room may also be an analogy for the critical grimaces of the reader who attempts to come to grips with this elusive book. It, like the Doctor, so restricts the possibilities for critical gesture that one becomes acutely aware of the slightest evaluative motion. But even such feelings of frustration are allowed for and commented upon:

Were you totally at your ease (in the Progress and Advice room) you would only be inclined to consider the Doctor's words in a leisurely manner, ... hypercritically, selecting this, rejecting that. ... it is you who have placed yourself in the Doctor's hands; your wishes are subservient to his, not vice versa; and his advice is given not to be questioned or even examined (to question is impertinent; to examine, pointless), but to be followed.³⁹

By substituting Author for Doctor, we may gauge what our position is intended to be. The fictional reality is structured in such a way

that it defeats or deflects comment. What the central character says of his mental state and his relationship with the public world comes, by implication, to be a comment on the nature of the fictional reality, "this again is in a sense the story of my life, nor does it really matter if it is not just the same story of a few paragraphs ago".⁴⁰ Reminding us that "the same life lends itself to any number of stories - parallel, concentric, mutually habitant or what you will",⁴¹ Horner, or Barth, is doing more than point out the importance of point of view. Within the pages of The End of the Road the same story, in spite of having but one narrator, takes all three forms. Horner lacks the distinguishing mark of the private world, a fairly consistent outlook. His hallmark is inconsistency yet his control over the fictional reality is complete. We cannot reach the public world save through the unreliable medium of Jacob Horner; the only dialogues which he seems to report verbatim are those with his Negro doctor, a medic who runs a dubious clinic dealing with all manner of paralyses and who, in spite of his claims to the contrary, does act as psychotherapist. Such dialogues do little more than prove how redundant the clinical picture is when it comes to the comprehension of character. At every turn Barth uses the 'insights' of psychoanalysis to prove the superiority of the fictional evocation.

Having concluded that the novel is primarily designed to explore the nature and possibilities of 'fictional' reality and to disarm the critic of his habitual weapons, we may then go on to discuss the methods and the results. The motives of Jacob Horner are not Jacob Horner's motives. At least, they are not initially his motives, stemming as they do from the formal, pre-planned therapy of the Doctor and not from any complex personality. Horner applies one of three rigid, arbitrary

rules when making a choice, Sinstrality, Antecedence and Alphabetical Priority, teaches grammar because it is mechanical and undemanding and goes about the world with only one firm intention, never to become paralysed, to be positive. As any action is positive, there is no need for consistency, he may switch roles at will, ignore any emotional or moral demands, evade all responsibility, be as synoptic and many-faceted as he chooses. In theory at least he, like the Invisible Man, is a collection of received roles; his apparently greater freedom in choice of role is taken care of by the Doctor's rules. Recalling that Doctor and Author are to some extent interchangeable, we realise that any discussion of Horner is, in effect, a discussion of Barth's powers of characterisation. This literary commonplace can, in the context of more conventionally structured fictional realities, be effectively ignored and the character discussed as if he were possessed of objective existence. When Horner and other characters talk, as they frequently do, of the possibility of Horner's non-existence, his lack of a definable personality, they are yet again reminding the reader that the salient point is not the fictional reality of this novel, but the nature of fictional reality in general. Horner's remark, "A day without weather is unthinkable, but for me there were frequently days without any moods at all. On these days, Jacob Horner, except in the meaningless metabolistic sense, ceased to exist, for I was without personality",⁴² is cunningly contrived to force upon us the nature of our relationship to the text. We know that in the metabolistic sense he does not exist. Our expectations, on entering the Progress and Advice room, were that we would be persuaded of the 'reality' of his personality by conventional literary means.

Of course, it is possible to look on Horner as a tragic figure, a

sensibility so dissociated from its environment that it must resort to the adoption of roles in order to achieve a semblance of existence. Horner might well be seen to symbolise the fate of sensibility in the modern world, the private world which, without a caring public world around it, must depend on itself and on clinical assistance for survival. Roles play an important part in others of Barth's works. Ebenezer Cooke is nothing until he chooses to become Virgin and Poet Laureate of Maryland, Giles Goatboy's problems stem from his ignorance of what his chosen role demands in terms of moral and social stances, and so on. It is also worth noting that the antagonists of Cooke and Goatboy, Burlingame and Bray, are credited with the ability to alter their outward appearances and so play any number of roles with conviction. However, to elevate Horner to the level of symbol would require considerable contortions on the part of the critic. Although his roles always entail an assumed sense of superiority, which is intended to act as cover for his feelings of inferiority, he plays these roles with a lack of conviction which negates any appeal he might have had. He is neither likeable nor despicable, neither positive nor negative. Barth so balances the equation of Horner's merits and demerits that, even when, at the end of the novel, he appears to become genuinely involved with Rennie's plight and to start assuming roles in deadly earnest, he cannot be seen as sympathetic. So synthetic and short-lived are his emotions and his poses, one cannot react to him as one would to a conventional character. One can only reiterate that his real 'role' is that of literary device, that he is placed within a fictional reality structured in such a way that it comments on itself.

This is writ large on every page, is inherent in almost all that Horner says, for he too is concerned with the nature of the reality he

achieves through the deployment of his fictions, "Fiction is a lie. Everyone necessarily becomes the hero of his own life story. ... so in this sense, fiction is not a lie at all, but a true representation of the distortion everyone makes of life".⁴³ Joe Morgan and Rennie, to whom Horner is attracted, have very fixed definitions of themselves and an apparently successful, if limited, mode of coping with reality. They become fictions within the fiction, Morgan has no accredited existence independent of Horner's vision and that vision chooses to see him as the faintly ludicrous antithesis of its vacillating self:

He's noble, and strong, and brave, more than anyone I've ever seen. A disaster for him is a disaster for intelligence, reason and civilisation, because he is the quintessence of these things. ... In the second place, he's completely ridiculous. Contemptible. ... He uses logic and this childish honesty as a club and a shield at the same time. Or you could say he's just insane, a monomaniac.⁴⁴

However, in a world where Horner imitates Joe, the above could be equally true of Horner, that "owl, peacock, chameleon, donkey and popinjay, fugitive from medieval bestiary, ... giant and dwarf, plenum and vacuum, admirable and contemptible".⁴⁵ It is inevitable that, at the end of the book, Horner and Morgan should exchange roles. Their mutual paternity of the embryo in Rennie's womb leads Morgan into the realm of conflicting speculation and Horner into the world of decisive action. For the reader, these mutually-exclusive yet interchangeable approaches to the world reflect his choice of approaches to the text. We could 'assign a role' to Horner and then get on with the plot, or we could remain perplexed in face of this "really arresting contradiction of concepts whose actual compatibility becomes perceptible only upon subtle reflection".⁴⁶

What subtle reflection does reveal is an inconsistency not wholly accounted for by the nature of Jacob Horner, devious literary device. The role he adopts in coping with the crisis of Rennie's pregnancy differs in important ways from all the other roles he assumes. Not only is it more sustained, it is also a response to external reality, not a part of the therapy. Horner comes to see that it is possible, even among the shifting sands of his many selves and roles, for other people to find something consistent enough to do them harm. But all he can do is retire to behind the screen of his multiple personalities, no longer the haven it once was, for he is now "not a little tired of myself, and of my knowledge of myself, and of my personal mystery".⁴⁷ One must question whether, in performing this albeit elegant volte face, turning Horner from the brittle, witty cynic into the suffering man, Barth is not being deliberately inconsistent. Horner's late comment, "the serpents of Knowledge and Imagination ... grown great in the fullness of time, no longer tempt but annihilate"⁴⁸ could be a warning to the would-be critic, or it could be a hint that the man behind the masks not only 'exists' as a character but is unhappy in that existence. Yet, if the latter is the case, then his appeal is muted by the extreme complexity of the structure of the overall fictional reality and by the suddenness with which his private world is transformed into the elicitor of traditional responses in the reader. Ultimately, that private world so defies definition that one can only conclude that Barth's prime intention is not to involve us with this particular fictional reality but to make us question the nature of fictional reality in general.

It also, of course, entails an examination of a private world at odds with its surrounding public world. Horner's brief contact with harsh

reality does go some way toward satisfying the traditional expectations of the reader. Attack these expectations as he may, Barth must also fulfil them if his fictional reality is to be more than a series of critical cul-de-sacs. Whether one concludes that the closing scenes of the book are at variance with the rest of the fictional reality or that they are subtly integrated with it, one must acknowledge that in conjuring with the whole concept of character Barth succeeds in delimiting the possibilities of response and in radically redefining the role of the reader in relation to the structure of the overall fictional reality.

Vladimir Nabokov's handling of the relationship between public and private worlds suggests that he too is concerned with this redefinition. His method of effecting it differs from Barth's in many respects, but both have used the private worlds of eccentric academics as their springboards. But whereas The End of the Road is clearly a literary exploitation of role-theory (a psychological notion increasingly outmoded), Nabokov's sources of inspiration are less scientific and more varied. Interpretative texts, language games, pornographic literature and detective stories are but a few of the forms he uses to contain his academically-inclined characters and their 'petit jeux' at the reader's expense.

Professor Timofey Pnin's private world appears, at first glance, to be a singular combination of comedy and tragedy. It is tempting to regard him as a character of pathos, the victim of an academic power-structure which cannot tolerate the gentle anachronism, but to do so would, one fears, be to act like Pnin himself who, when faced with a cartoon, is too intent upon its logical and rational impossibilities to appreciate

the humour. With Pnin we can accept neither the comedy nor the tragedy at their face value for here, as elsewhere, we are in imminent danger of being betrayed into false critical poses.

The narrator invites us to laugh at Pnin's incompetence, at his naïve reactions to American society and all its gadgetry and at his dated Russian sense of humour. All these things are treated in a broadly comic way by a narrator who clearly feels superior to his fellow-countryman, "He (Pnin) was beloved not for any essential ability, but for those unforgettable digressions of his, when he would remove his glasses and beam at the past while massaging the lenses of the present".⁴⁹ As he makes this remark, the narrator himself is in the midst of one of his own 'unforgettable digressions'. He is, in fact, guilty of every Pninian trait, even making fun of the Professor's excruciating English when his own is far from perfect, "I would have preferred him to discover, upon his arrival to Cremona ..."⁵⁰. As he makes lengthy, never wholly relevant, digressions into the past and dwells laboriously upon incidents amusing only to himself, so echoing the Pninian lecture-technique, as he displays a disproportionate aversion to psychoanalysis, reminding us of Pnin's phobia about draughts, we become a trifle curious about his relationship to Pnin. By his own admission, he has only met the man of whom he boasts so intimate a knowledge on two occasions.

As we have seen, it is not only Pnin who comes under fire but the whole academic set-up at Waindell, especially one Jack Cockerell, who is famed for his Pninian impersonations. It is only when the novel has come almost full-circle, with the arrival of the narrator at Waindell, that one realises the entire book has been no more than an imitation of Cockerell's imitations of Pnin and that he, with Cockerell, could

be said to have "acquired an unmistakable resemblance to the man that he had been imitating", or indeed, that "this Pnin business had become ... a kind of fatal obsession which substitutes its own victim for that of the initial ridicule".⁵¹ That the book should come almost full-circle is important. It begins with the narrator's version of Pnin's trip to Cremona which, as one sees at the close, differs in certain vital respects from that of Cockerell. At this juncture one recalls Pnin's remark about the narrator, "Now don't believe a word he says ... He is a dreadful inventor.",⁵² and begins seriously to question the narrative perspective. What we discover is that the book has not one but two fictional realities. There is the obvious fictional reality, based on the narrator's vision of Pnin, and beyond this the faint outline of another, partially contradictory, balance between public and private worlds. Having accepted the narrator as trustworthy, we find at the close of the book that what has been important throughout was not, as we had assumed, the delightful private world of Timofey Pnin but the private world of his successor, the ex-lover of his ex-wife, the exploiter of Pnin as a source of amusing stories, that is, the narrator. It is then necessary to reconsider all that has gone before, for we cannot accept the Pnin presented to us by so prejudiced a raconteur. Yet, because we know so little of the latter, we cannot really comment on him either, or correct the balance in the picture he paints.

Pnin, of course, bears all the signs of having been created by the verbal, Campus tradition. All his idiosyncracies cannot disguise the fact that what we have here is but a variation on the theme of the absent-minded professor, the ever-alert academic who, despite all his vigilance, his many long years in America and his undoubted intelligence,

still falls foul of a public world he cannot really comprehend. Pnin is a stereotype. Entwhistle, trying to tempt Clements to come to Godwin, says, "We have a real lake. We have everything. We even have a Professor Pnin on our staff".⁵³ What the verbal tradition does not supply the narrator provides. He is, as Pnin's successor, well-acquainted with the inhabitants of Waindell, as Liza's ex-lover he know her well and, as a Russian emigré, he is familiar with the group who meet at Cook's Castle. Nabokov extends the 'fun' by having the latter group talk about himself, regretting that 'Vladimir Vladimirovich is not here'. The fun has a serious intent; Nabokov parodies the narrator and the sorts of people who inhabit the campus at Waindell, pointing out their inward-turned narrowmindedness, their lack of originality and their apparent need for such figures as Pnin, round whom they may gather united by a sense of superiority. He even goes so far as to suggest that this arrangement of the public world is far from unique, "on any given college staff one could find not only a person who was uncommonly like one's dentist or the local postmaster, but also a person who had a twin within the same professional group".⁵⁴

The Pnin presented to us by the narrator shares an excessive sensitivity to his surroundings with both the narrator himself and with Jacob Horner. Living in rented accommodation is one of the features of the life of the bachelor academic, a feature which does nothing to assist him in making a meaningful connection with his public world. He is fated to exist forever in the shadow of some previous incumbent, to live in an environment which is not his own. As a 'type' he also experiences some difficulty and alarm when driving cars; the mobile exploits of Pnin are a saga in themselves; Levin, exploring the face of America en route to the Pacific, not only gets lost, drives slowly in

constant fear of losing control of the vehicle, is crowded by other drivers but, having just congratulated himself that 'you learned as you lived, a refreshing change from books', lands in a ditch, and Herzog, that 'circumspect driver', has no sooner joined the mainstream of traffic than he is shunted into a utility pole. This failure to come to terms with the car is, perhaps, symptomatic of a deeper failure to come to grips with the public world or private destiny.

We have not seen the last of Professor Pnin as, a pathetic and affecting spectacle, he departs from Waindell in his small blue sedan, sandwiched between two trucks with his little white dog barking abuse at the large brown one belonging to the narrator. He reappears on the campus of Wordsmith, "Head of the bloated Russian Department, a regular martinet in regard to his underlings",⁵⁵ again, perhaps, being grossly misunderstood or even taking revenge for past indignities. Once more, however, it is Pnin's fate to be merely a part of someone else's story. In discussing The End of the Road it was suggested that the critic gains some satisfaction in extracting a few phrases from a text and using them as the impetus for a bon mot or two of his own. Pale Fire, the novel in which we catch a second glimpse of Pnin, is based on just such a procedure. Using the interpretative or annotated text as a format, Nabokov makes mock of the critic who brings to his discussion of a work so many preoccupations or obsessions of his own that they and not the work itself shape his responses; he farther succeeds in presenting the would-be critic of Pale Fire with a few insoluble problems. The book is divided into three parts, a Forward and Commentary by Charles Kinbote and a poem in four cantos by John Shade. The poem itself is clearly an integral part of the fictional reality, in that it is written not by Shade but by Nabokov, and, at

least structurally, it is the controlling influence. Because, however, it is a fairly good poem in its own right, treated rather badly by Kinbote, one is tempted to deal with it as a separate entity, a reflection of the private world of John Shade. The danger is that in so doing one would not only be under the influence of Kinbote, having to rely on him to some extent for elucidation of the more obscure imagery, but one would also be prone to 'Kinbotian' analysis, supplanting his interpretations with equally subjective, though less highly-coloured, ones of our own. Would we not, in attempting to supplant the critical comments of a fictional character, be displaying a certain naïveté, not to say derangement of the same order as that evident in the Kinbote/Gradus connection? Once more Nabokov uses the structure of his fictional reality to manoeuvre the aspiring critic into untenable positions.

There seems little doubt that Kinbote is a madman, suffering from the delusion that he is the ex-king of Zembla, the object of an assassin and a scholar par excellence. The extent of his derangement is apparent in the manner in which he presents the reader with material which virtually proves that he is insane, fondly imagining that we, like he, are deranged to the point where we will share his madness. Clinically, his picture is very bad; in fact it is so bad that one might almost suspect Nabokov of doing a double-bluff. There is, after all, no reason why Kinbote should not, within the context of a work of fiction, be accepted as fugitive king. There have been precedents. If we may, for the moment, assume insanity, or at least extreme eccentricity, to be the hallmark of Kinbote's private world and practical criticism, then we may turn to the Forward.

Beginning in a formal, factual way, it is not long before the Forward begins to turn from poet to commentator, "There is a very loud amusement park right in front of my present lodgings".⁵⁶ Admitting that the poem's Fourth Canto, in the shape in which the poet left it, makes little sense, Kinbote nevertheless refutes the claims of other critics that the whole is nothing more than 'disjointed drafts none of which yields any definite text'. Thus, we cannot be certain how far the finished poem resembles what Shade intended and how far it owes its shape to the interventions of Kinbote, although he does seem to be rather disappointed when, on first reading it, it does not bear much resemblance to 'the wild and glorious romance' of Zembla with which he, Shade's 'discreet companion', has been filling the poet's ears. This at least would suggest that he remains true to the text, depending on his commentary to discover Zembla in 'the vaults of variants'. He has, we gather, acquired the text by dubious means, much to the chagrin of other scholars and the poet's widow, Sybil. She is Kinbote's arch-enemy, being blamed for 'draining' the text of every trace of the material contributed by him, "she used to call me 'an elephantine tick; a king-sized botfly; a macaco worm; a monstrous parasite of genius'".⁵⁷

Instead of the wild and glorious romance - what did I have?
An autobiographical, eminently Appalachian, rather old-fashioned narrative in a neo-Popian prosodic style - but void of my magic, of that special rich streak of magical madness which I was sure would run through it and make it transcend its time.⁵⁸

Kinbote is not daunted. With an imaginative effort far transcending that of the poet, he forces a semblance of Zembla into the words. The Commentary becomes increasingly unrelated to the text, one line giving

rise to no fewer than twenty pages of Zemblan history and the various times at which Shade sat down to write being contorted into near-contemporaneity with the movements of Gradus, the supposed assassin. We are presented with two possible interpretations of events. One is that Kinbote is the ex-king of Zembla and the target of an assassination attempt in which Shade was killed by mistake. The other, gleaned from inadvertent comments by Kinbote who has the happy knack of being able to see only one possible interpretation and is, therefore, prone to let slip things which a more discreet fabulator would expunge, runs as follows. Kinbote teaches in the English Department of a university; he is not popular, renowned for his inquisitiveness (he is referred to as the Great Beaver) and his sychophantic attitude to the elderly poet, John Shade. Lonely and insecure, he purchases a large car and rents a large house adjacent to the Shades' then proceeds to foist himself upon them, seeking to interest Shade in him by inventing the childish story that he is in fact a fugitive king. He elaborates this story, coming to believe it himself. Shade, for reasons best known to himself, tolerates this homosexual maniac. When Shade is killed by an escapee from the local asylum, Kinbote tries to save him by diving between the two men, an act which earns him the gratitude of Shade's widow and her permission for him to edit the poem on which her husband had been working at the time of his death. Kinbote then proceeds to do all manner of damage to the work, annotating it in hiding from other irate scholars, untroubled by the absence of reference books for, as he says, "the human reality of such a poem ... has to depend entirely on the reality of its author and his surrounding attachments and so forth, a reality which only my notes can provide".⁵⁹ Shade's 'attachment' to the annotator was so great apparently, that the poem is not so much about its author's life as about Kinbote and

Zembla. A glance at the notes confirms our worst suspicions; the longest one occurs under 'Kinbote' and every other one is devoted to Zembla or Zemblan history, that best-documented of public worlds with roots in private fantasy.

These notes also send the reader reeling from 'Word Golf - see Lass', to 'Lass - see Mass', 'Mass - see Male' back to 'Male - see Word Golf'. This incestuous and inscrutable pattern also evinces itself in relation to Zembla, whose name derives from Novaya Zemlya, or 'New Land', a group of islands in the Arctic. Kinbote lives in New Wye, in the New World and one wonders whether this is just coincidence or yet another clue to the wellsprings of his fantasies. The reader finds that his role is increasingly that of the literary detective rather than the literary critic for, until one has established what is 'fiction' and what 'fantasy', it is difficult to make meaningful comment. Presenting us with a private world which elects to view the public world in manner reminiscent of the most clichéd notions of romance and drama, leaving the reader to divine, from hints, whether or not this private world is, in fact, deranged, Nabakov succeeds in making us question what our expectations of 'fictional reality' are.

Because the fictional reality of the last three novels has been structured in such a way that the reader cannot see the public world save through the medium of a private world which, for one reason or another, he regards as highly suspect, the public world has not played a very important role. This is not the case with Herzog. In Bellow's novel public and private worlds are neither in opposition nor in harmony but are related in complex, chaotic and, at times, contradictory ways, becoming fused and unified through that most eccentric and comprehensive

of all mediums, Moses E. Herzog. Herzog is singularly alive, both emotionally and intellectually. A sensual man, sensitive to the sights and sounds of his environment, he expends a considerable amount of time and effort in trying to fit his vision of the contemporary scene into the annals of other world views, intellectual constructs which made all the phenomena of previous ages seem parts of a comprehensible whole. Learned allusion can, as we have seen in The Groves of Academe, be symptomatic of artistic inadequacy and, indeed, Bellow has been accused of producing "bromide for guilty intellectuals" in writing this 'major Establishment work'.⁶⁰ But, in using a variety of literary modes and the outlines of a multitude of philosophical doctrines, Bellow creates a unified whole whose crux is the private world of Herzog. Of course, the fact that he remains true to the artistic demands inherent in the choice of novel as form will not dissuade those critics whose anti-intellectual and anti-Establishment prejudices lead them to ignore the unity of the form in their detestation of the content. As Herzog aptly comments, "All higher or moral tendencies lie under suspicion of being rackets. Things we simply honour with old words, but deny in our very nerves".⁶¹

Herzog's private world has one outstanding feature; above the masses of self-conceit, the wide expanses of good-intention and the monumental errors, there rises a self-awareness so acute that its victim cannot rest. Throughout the novel it is the dominant factor, for Bellow has set his character the task of reviewing his past life in a search for direction and meaning, and it is the apparently haphazard, associative pattern of this memory parade which structures the novel chronologically. From the 'cheerful clairvoyance' of Ludéyville where we first encounter and finally leave the protagonist, we move with him through the

physical locations of his immediate past, a circle covering New York, Martha's Vineyard, Chicago and Ludeyville. Interwoven with this is a wider circle of locations from a more distant past, the two being portrayed as a sort of moving present. Both the movement and the locations are indisputably a part of the private world of Herzog, stamped with his own perspective:

In a cab, through the hot streets where brick and brownstone buildings were crowded, Herzog held the strap and his large eyes were fixed on the sights of New York. The square shapes were vivid, not inert, they gave him a sense of fateful motion, almost intimacy. Somehow he felt himself part of it all - in the rooms, in the cellars, stores - and at the same time he sensed the danger of these multiple excitements.⁶²

This emotional and imaginative response to the impact of environment is consistent with Herzog's sensitive nature and it in turn affects our perspective of that world. Like the narrator in Barth's The Floating Opera and Ellison's Invisible Man, Herzog records the trivial, ironic juxtapositions of things around him. He notes the beautifully-bearded Negro blowing a gilt trumpet whose voice cannot be heard above the noise of demolition. Where, in the works of Faulkner and James, the objects of the public world always have some bearing upon the state of mind of the perceiving characters, in this and other modern novels, the combinations of objects are often ironic, even potentially emblematic of the state of the public world, but they seldom have any specific relevance to the characters. They are noted in passing, without even the implicit link which would occur in the works of the Naturalists, a part of the pattern of alienation referred to at the outset of this chapter. It is significant that the characters do not expect their public worlds to compliment their private worlds, nor are they even appalled by the lack of such a relationship. Only when the protagonist

brings to the public world a private world accustomed to relate to its environment, as in Mr. Sammler's Planet, does the public world's lack of sense or relevance become salient. It takes Sammler, the one-eyed Polish Oxonian, leaving with some dignity the lecture-hall in which his lecture on the Bloomsbury group had been greeted with calls of 'Shit', to see how ludicrous and pointless it all is, "All this confused sex-excrement-militancy, explosiveness, abusiveness, tooth-showing, Barbary ape howling".⁶³ He it is who is "awakened not to purpose but to aesthetic consumption of the environment",⁶⁴ putting what he sees in the streets of New York in the context of his greater world-experience. Herzog lacks such a context, seeking to find it by circling at random among ideas, feelings and actualities. His response to Chicago is undoubtedly aesthetic, but is devoid of perspective, "Clumsy, tender, stinking Chicago, dumped on its ancient lake bottom; and this murky orange West, and the hoarseness of factories and trains, spilling gas and soot on the newborn summer".⁶⁵

Rather like Levin, Herzog's aspirations for mankind stand in ironical contrast to his personal proclivities. In defining the problem of Man, "the problem as I see it is not one of definition but of the total reconsideration of human qualities. Or perhaps even the discovery of qualities",⁶⁶ he is, to a large extent, defining his own problem. Believing himself to have failed as a father, a son, a brother, etc., he has a tremendous, unfocussed capacity for love and an intellectual ability which, in its awareness of many possibilities, is all but stultified. But the coincidence between the problems of Herzog's private world and those of the public world does not mean that he is in any sense archetypal, a representative of suffering humanity. Herzog is unique and the book sets out to explore the effects of letting this

well-informed and well-intentioned private world devote itself to the contemplation of its environment. Hoping to lead the world to salvation under the banners of the old idealists and with nothing but his boundless good-intention for support, Herzog is fated to spend his time writing letters to the great, the good and the dead, propounding his theories whilst the rest of the world remains oblivious or, at best, concerned for his sanity.

What is happening throughout the novel does not, therefore, concern mankind. Although at times Moses is convinced that the "progress of civilisation, indeed, the survival of civilisation depended on the success of Moses E. Herzog",⁶⁷ the goal he seeks is personal reconciliation with his own ceaselessly inquiring mind. Where Kinbote, Levin and Horner all suffered from too limited a vision, Herzog suffers from too heightened a self-awareness. He can act as his own analyst, "What sort of character was it? Well, in modern vocabulary it was narcissistic; it was masochistic; it was anachronistic. His clinical picture was depressive - not the severest type; not manic depressive".⁶⁸ He does not approve of his own personality, seeing his 'short-sightedness' as a strategy to gain sympathy and deploring the reliance he places on the good-will of the world. Self-deification goes hand in hand with self-denigration and, in moments of despair, he admits that "Social organisation, for all its clumsiness and evil, has accomplished far more and embodies more good than I do, for at least it sometimes gives justice".⁶⁹ It is only at the end of the novel when, established once more on the couch at Ludeyville, Herzog is alone that he faces the truth. He is a crusader for the 'real' totally divorced from reality. In pursuit of his 'grand synthesis' he has opened his private world to the environment, to ideas, memories and modes of thought, only to find that

his task has become not the salvation of mankind but the salvation of self. Contemplation has led not to answers but to paralysis. Herzog abandons the 'only connect' maxim of Mr. Sammler for his own, 'only accept'.

At the outset of this chapter, it was stated that Herzog is the definitive novel of this group. This claim is not based so much on his status as an academic as on the nature of his relationship with the public world. The protagonists in the other novels discussed are all divorced from more or less specific, confined public worlds, a fact which is reflected in the nature of their divorcement. Whilst they, like Herzog, are articulate, sensitive and self-aware and whilst these qualities are, in all cases, stumbling blocks in the struggle to make meaningful contact with the public world, the campus, as we have seen, makes specific demands in terms of conformity to moral and political norms. That this demand for conformity exists side-by-side with a certain, albeit theoretical, respect for the individual and his idiosyncracies is a nice ambiguity. Levin, Prinn, Mulcahy and Horner are all alive to this ambiguity, although only Mulcahy successfully exploits it. The ambiguity in Herzog is of much greater scope. His private world, not unlike that of the others in its apparent inability to cope with the world on a mundane level, in its awareness of itself, its attachment to principles and its tendency to extreme eccentricity or even insanity, is brought into conflict with the whole of modern American society, and his failure to connect is, proportionately, more significant. He is at odds with the limited microcosm of a campus but, in the terminology of that clever yet tedious allegory, John Barth's Giles Goatboy, with the Western Campus. By putting their central characters in the context of a campus and by showing that these places

attempt to replicate the sorts of communal public worlds found in novels from Norris to Faulkner, other authors may imply that modern man is divorced from his environment; Herzog states this explicitly.

It is significant that, save in The Groves of Academe, the private world of the central character is used as the prime giver of shape to the overall fictional reality. In the works of Henry James, the individual sensibility was of equal importance but it was never given complete charge of the perspective. Other characters and the author were always present to give their interpretations and to allow the reader to judge which viewpoint was the most valid, or at least to enable him to discern the prejudices inherent in the central perspective. If the arbitrary rules by which society operated could be rendered ineffective by the exercise of individual consciousness, they nevertheless provided a stable base, a criterion by which the actions of the characters might be judge. Herzog, clinging to a strap as he is conveyed across New York by bus, may assure the world that "there are moral realities, ... as surely as there are molecular and atomic ones",⁷⁰ but their existence does not entail any degree of certainty, nor does it inform the actions of the characters. What was once a set of rules controlling action has become yet another abstraction.

As we have said, the campus novel provides the author with an opportunity to study the disintegration of the links between public and private worlds, for the campus is a species of community. Levin, Pnin and Horner are all expelled from their respective microcosms; by implication, those who remain do so at some cost to their status as individuals. Yet individuality itself is not proposed as an ideal state. Without meaningful links to any public world, Herzog, Pnin,

Levin, Horner, and the Invisible Man, as well as a host of others, cannot create any satisfactory private reality. The Invisible Man, surrounded by light bulbs, illicitly draining power from the city, has the most tenuous grip on his own identity. It is confirmed only by the lights and is the product not of any positive process but of a series of rejections of proffered shapes. Herzog's resolution, too, is negative, entailing the rejection of the public world and all the models which it attempted to force upon him. Horner cannot be certain that there is a man behind the masks; Levin's long struggle towards a new identity ends up in a cruel parody of his dream; Kinbote, possibly the most successful creator of a private reality, is hunted by the world, and so on. Arthur Sammler, 'confidant of New York eccentrics, ... registrar of madness', makes some of the most perceptive comments on the antipathy between public and private worlds:

But at the present level of crude vision, agitated spirits fled from the oppressiveness of "the common life", separating themselves from the rest of their species, from the life of their species, hoping perhaps to get away (in some peculiar sense), from the death of their species. To perform higher actions, to serve the imagination with special distinction, it seems essential to be histrionic. This, too, is a brand of madness. Madness has always been the favorite choice of the civilised man who prepares himself for a noble achievement. It is often the simplest state of availability to ideals. Most of us are satisfied with that: signifying by a kind of madness devotion to, availability for, higher purposes.⁷¹

Thus, the crisis of identity suffered by Joe Christmas has become the lot of sensitive man; he does not need the polarities of race for his crucifixion. The awareness of the antipathy between his public and private worlds is sufficient for a cross. And, as Faulkner acknowledged at the end of a Requiem For A Nun, the time when one could postulate a community of consciousness between an individual and his

environment and still retain any vestige of credibility is past.

We have, in a sense, come full circle. The novels of the Naturalists, portraying man as the passive plaything of his environment and his baser instincts, may be far removed from the novels discussed in this chapter in terms of literary sophistication. But, are not Herzog, and Alexander Portnoy in Portnoy's Complaint, ultimately passive in face of the world? In none of the works considered here does man successfully oppose his environment. The struggle may have become internalised and complicated, but the result is remarkably similar. Although it is the private and not the public world which is paramount in the structure of the overall fictional reality, although there is a tremendous struggle before the final defeat, and although the nature of the public world has altered, it is once more victorious, no longer amenable to exploitation by visionaries such as Gatsby. The problems which, in novels written around the turn of the century, assailed the lower economic groups are now assailing the intellectual élite. The pressure to conform has supplanted baser instincts, the private world has become much more refined and sophisticated in its aspirations, yet the environment is once more a hostile opponent.

Returning to Sammler's remark about madness being the simplest state of availability to ideals, one must note the presence of the psychiatrist in the novels discussed here, and in many other contemporary works. It is no longer possible to portray private worlds by relying, as Dreiser did, on Psychological Insights for, as Herzog observes, "... this is an age of insight. The laws of psychology are known to all educated people".⁷² In the works by Barth, Bellow and Nabokov psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts are variously, but always scathingly, mentioned.

The End of the Road, as we have seen, relies heavily on Jungian Theory⁽¹⁾ and the Doctor is a significant figure; in Herzog, in addition to the numerous couches, there is an analyst whose prejudice in favour of Madeleine colours his diagnosis of Herzog and renders his insights worthless; Pnin's wife, Lisa was a psychiatrist who ran off to marry another of the same species, producing as a result a child whose invulnerability to all psychoanalytic tests is the focus of much of the book's humour; Kinbote could clearly use some sort of psychiatric help, but the parts of the textbook on the subject which he sees fit to quote leave one in complete agreement with his conclusion, "Do these clowns really believe what they preach,"⁷³ The recurrence of the figure of the analyst may merely be a reflection of the current American preoccupation with such people, yet one feels there is more to it than that. In Portnoy's Complaint and Myra Breckinridge, the confessions of character to 'shrink' are a logical extension of the epistolary convention, allowing the character to lay bare his private world. But, especially in Myra, the awareness that Montag will eventually read these confessions has a profound effect on their finished shape. Myra deliberately tries to upset him by playing on what she knows to be his 'hang-ups'. Instead of being therapeutic, he is positively anti-therapeutic, driving her to ever greater excess. Here and elsewhere, one feels that novelists are defending their rights to delineate states of mind, entering into competition with the armchair analysts who trespass on what was once their exclusive preserve. By making fun of their rivals and including them in their fictions, novelists reassert,

(1) According to Jung's Analytic Theory, "The persona is a mask which is worn by the person in response to the demands of social convention and tradition and to his own archetypal needs". It is his 'public personality'. Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1957), pp.83-4

in a most pointed way, the superior ability of literature to portray aberrant 'states of being'. Of course, when one bears in mind what Sammler says, the presence of the analyst could be taken as a sinister portent, a sign that the public world is a police state, unwilling to tolerate the nonconformity which is, potentially, productive of ideals.

The protagonists in this group of novels are self-aware and articulate and well able to 'speak for themselves'. The disposition of their private worlds is the crucial factor in the structuring of the overall fictional reality and the role of the public world as an effective counterpoint is diminished. In A New Life it fails to impinge on the character, in Herzog it is present only through his perception of it and is a shaping force only insofar as he chooses to respond to it, in The End of the Road it does not exist, save in the last few pages, and we are subjected to a character who is an aggressive weapon, daring us to make slick comments about the book as the result of our critical experience and psychological insight. In Pictures From An Institution it again is present only as a function of the private world of the narrator and in Pale Fire it is but a tantalising glimpse of another and much more comfortable perspective, veiled from us by the narrator. We are no longer privy to many perspectives on a central situation. The perspective and the situation have merged into one and the structure of the overall fictional reality has, likewise, come to hinge on the private world, be it through first- or third-person narration. Even if, in some cases, the artistic effort is bent upon discomfiting the reader, it is true to say that in all cases the excellence lies in the portrayal of eccentric private worlds which, although they may not put fixed or even fruitful, constructions upon experience, are revealed in depth.

Thus, the private world has come to be the crucial factor in the structuring of the overall fictional reality. This disposition of the formal characteristics of the novel does not prevent the author from depicting the public world but it provides him with a skeletal framework for that depiction. His portrayal is selective, dependant for shape upon the imagined, perceiving private world. In the course of this thesis, we have studied authors who attempted to give the public world the dominant position in their fictional reality and, because their interpretations of that world (usually an actual social microcosm) were predominant, rather than the imagined interpretations of a character, the overall structure came almost inevitably to suffer a diminution in artistic worth. Only William Faulkner, whose vision of the public world was itself profoundly aesthetic, succeeded in producing artistically distinguished novels organised around the public sphere. This examination of American novels has shown that where priority is given to the artistic demands of the novel form then the resultant work is more effective, as a coherent, subtle and aesthetic whole, than a work in which there is some ulterior organising principle, such as a propagandist aim. Coherence, subtlety and artistic worth are, of course, evaluative terms, but the public and private world dichotomy has given access to fundamental, formal characteristics of the novel and such evaluations are, therefore, based on analysis, not induction. Formal or structural aspects cannot be divorced from the content of the text but, where content may vary in an infinity of ways, the form is a constant as a result, and the dichotomy may, potentially, be generalised and applied to novels of any culture or period. It is hoped that, in applying the dichotomy to American novels written over the past nine decades, it has been shown to be a valuable and incisive critical tool and that it has also been demonstrated that the relationship between public and private worlds is crucial to the discussion of American literature.

NOTES

1. Mary McCarthy, The Groves of Academe (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952), p.68
2. McCarthy, op. cit., p.136
3. Robert Nisbet, The Degradation of the Academic Dogma: The University in America, 1945-1970 (London: Heinemann, 1969)
4. McCarthy, op. cit., p.90
5. Vladimir Nabokov, Pnin, 1st pub. 1957, 4th ed. (London: Heinemann, 1969), p.138
6. Randall Jarrell, Pictures From An Institution, 1st pub. Knopf (New York, 1952), this ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), p.49
7. McCarthy, op. cit., p.93
8. Nisbet, op. cit., p.205
9. McCarthy, op. cit. p.11
10. Jarrell, op. cit., p.11
11. Bernard Malamud, A New Life, 1st pub. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy (New York, 1961), this ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p.212
12. Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1952), this ed., 2nd ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p.119
13. McCarthy, op. cit., p.63
14. Nabokov, Pnin, p.9
15. John Barth, The End of the Road, 1st ed. 1958, this ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p.6
16. Jarrell, op. cit., p.3
17. Paul Woodring, The Higher Learning in America: A Reassessment (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p.132
18. McCarthy, op. cit., p.61 ---
19. Doris Grumbach, The Company She Kept, Mary McCarthy Herself and Her Writing (London: The Bodley Head, 1967), p.123
20. Grumbach, op. cit., p.125
21. Jarrell, op. cit., p.133

22. Jarrell, op. cit., p.75
23. Jarrell, op. cit., p.132
24. Jarrell, op. cit., pp.215-216
25. Jarrell, op. cit., p.192
26. Leslie A. Fielder, Symbolism and American Literature, 8th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.161
27. Malamud, op. cit., p.7
28. Malamud, op. cit., p.20
29. Malamud, op. cit., p.103
30. Malamud, op. cit., p.199
31. Malamud, op. cit., p.70
32. Malamud, op. cit., p.185
33. Malamud, op. cit., p.272
34. Malamud, op. cit., p.219
35. Malamud, op. cit., p.80
36. Nisbet, op. cit., p.120
37. Barth, op. cit., p.2
38. Barth, op. cit., p.2
39. Barth, op. cit., p.3
40. Barth, op. cit., p.4
41. Barth, op. cit., p.4
42. Barth, op. cit., p.33
43. Barth, op. cit., p.83
44. Barth, op. cit., p.51
45. Barth, op. cit., p.114
46. Barth, op. cit., p.135
47. Barth, op. cit., p.176
48. Barth, op. cit., p.187
49. Nabokov, Pnin, p.11
50. Nabokov, Pnin, p.25

51. Nabokov, Pnin, p.187
52. Nabokov, Pnin, p.185
53. Nabokov, Pnin, op. cit., p.37
54. Nabokov, Pnin, p.148
55. Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), p.155
56. Nabokov, Pale Fire, p.13
57. Nabokov, Pale Fire, p.171
58. Nabokov, Pale Fire, p.296
59. Nabokov, Pale Fire, pp.28-29
60. Saul Bellow and the Critics, ed. Irving Malin (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp.207-208
61. Saul Bellow, Herzog, 1st pub. Viking (New York, 1964), this ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p.62
62. Bellow, Herzog, p.33
63. Saul Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p.43
64. Bellow, Mr. Sammler, p.44
65. Bellow, Herzog, p.249
66. Bellow, Herzog, p.171
67. Bellow, Herzog, p.132
68. Bellow, Herzog, p.10
69. Bellow, Herzog, p.227
70. Bellow, Herzog, p.185
71. Bellow, Mr. Sammler, p.148
72. Bellow, Herzog, p.198
73. Nabokov, Pale Fire, p.87

BIBLIOGRAPHY

TEXTS

- John Barth, The End of the Road, 1st ed. 1958, this ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1967)
- Saul Bellow, Herzog, 1st pub. Viking (New York, 1964), this ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969)
- Saul Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970)
- Stephen Crane, Maggie, A Girl of the Streets, 1st pub. (New York: Johnston Smith, 1893), this ed. in The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane, ed. Thomas A. Gullason (New York: Doubleday, 1967)
- Stephen Crane, George's Mother, 1st pub. (New York and London: Edward Arnold, 1896), this ed. in The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane, ed. Thomas A. Gullason (New York: Doubleday, 1967)
- John Dos Passos, U.S.A., 1st pub. 1937, this ed., 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1960).
- Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday, 1900), this ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965)
- Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy, 1st pub. (New York: Liverwright, 1925), this ed. (London: Constable, 1926)
- Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1952), this ed., 2nd ed., Penguin Modern Classic, (Middlesex, 1968)
- William Faulkner, Sartoris, 1st pub. Harcourt Brace (New York, 1929), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964)
- William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1929), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956)
- William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1930), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970)
- William Faulkner, Sanctuary, 1st pub. Cape & Smith (New York, 1930), this ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966)
- William Faulkner, Light in August, 1st pub. Smith & Haas (New York, 1932), this ed. 2nd. ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960)
- William Faulkner, Pylon, 1st pub. Smith & Haas (New York, 1932), this ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967)
- William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1936), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965)

- William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1938), this ed., 3rd ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970)
- William Faulkner, The Wild Palms, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1939), this ed., 3rd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962)
- William Faulkner, The Hamlet, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1940), this ed., (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963)
- William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1948), this ed., 5th ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962)
- William Faulkner, Requiem For A Nun, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1951), this ed. The Collected Works of William Faulkner (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965)
- William Faulkner, The Town, 1st pub. Random House (New York, 1957), this ed., 2nd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967)
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, 1st pub. Scribner's (New York, 1926), this ed. The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald, Vol. I, 4th ed. (London, 1966)
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon, 1st pub. Scribner's (New York, 1941), this ed. Penguin Books (Middlesex, 1972)
- Henry James, Roderick Hudson, 1st pub. 1875, this ed., based on 1878 revised ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1969)
- Henry James, The American, 1st pub. 1877, this ed., based on 1879 London ed., Signet Classic (New York, 1963)
- Henry James, The Europeans, 1st pub. 1878, this ed., 2nd ed. Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1967)
- Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, 1st pub. 1881, this ed., 3rd ed. Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1968)
- Henry James, The Princess Casamassima, 1st pub. 1886, this ed., Perennial Classic (New York: Harper Row, 1968)
- Henry James, The Bostonians, 1st pub., 1886, this ed., 2nd ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1969)
- Henry James, The Golden Bowl, 1st pub. 1904, this ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1966)
- Henry James, The American Scene, 1st pub. 1907, this ed., ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1968)
- Randall Jarrell, Pictures From An Institution, 1st pub. Knopf (New York, 1952), this ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1960)
- Sinclair Lewis, Main Street, 1st. pub. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1920), this ed. in Lewis At Zenith, A Three Novel Omnibus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961)

- Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt, 1st pub. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1922), this ed. in Lewis at Zenith, A Three Novel Omnibus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).
- Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry, 1st pub. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927), this ed. Signet Book (New York, 1967)
- Sinclair Lewis, Dodsworth, 1st pub. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), this ed. Signet Book (New York, 1967)
- Jack London, Martin Eden, 1st pub. (London: Macmillan, 1908), this ed. The Bodley Head Jack London, Vol. III (London, 1964)
- Jack London, The Iron Heel, 1st pub. (London: Macmillan, 1908), this ed. in Jack London, American Rebel, ed. Philip S. Foner, 2nd ed. (New York: Citadel Press, 1964)
- Jack London, John Barleycorn, 1st pub. (New York: The Century Co., 1913), this ed. The Bodley Head Jack London, Vol. II (London, 1964)
- Norman Mailer, Marilyn, A Biography (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973)
- Bernard Malamud, A New Life, 1st pub. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy (New York, 1961), this ed. (Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1968)
- Mary McCarthy, The Groves of Academe (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952)
- Vladimir Nabokov, Pnin, 1st pub. 1957, this ed. (London: Heinemann, 1969)
- Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962)
- Frank Norris, Blix, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1899), this ed. in A Novelist in the Making, ed. James D. Hart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970)
- Frank Norris, McTeague, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1899), this ed., 4th ed., New American Library, Signet Classic (New York, 1964)
- Frank Norris, The Octopus, 1st pub. 1901, this ed., ed. Kenneth S. Lynn, Riverside Press (Boston, 1958)
- Frank Norris, Vandover and the Brute, written 1899, 1st pub. (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1914), this ed. in A Novelist in the Making ed. James D. Hart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970)
- Frank Norris, The Responsibilities of the Novelist, Essays written for 'The Critic' and 'World's Work' as well as for syndicated newspaper columns, 1901-2. First published, with the above title, 1903. Reprinted American Century Series (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967)
- Budd Schulberg, What Makes Sammy Run? 1st pub. 1941, this ed., 6th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1964)

Parker Tyler, Magic and Myth of the Movies, 1st pub. (New York: Holt & Co., 1947), 1st British ed. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971)

Gore Vidal, Myra Breckinridge, 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968)

Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust, 1st pub. 1939, this ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963)

Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, 1st ed. 1905, this ed. (New York: Scribner's 1941)

Edith Wharton, The Reef, 1st ed. 1912, this ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1965)

Edith Wharton, The Custom of the Country, 1st ed. 1913, this ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1941)

Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 1st pub. D. Appleton & Co. (New York, 1920), this ed., The Modern Library (New York, 1948)

CRITICISM AND BACKGROUND

Lars Ahnebrink, The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction (1891-1903). A Study of the Works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris with Special Reference to some European Influences (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961)

Edward Arnold, The American Novel and the Nineteen Twenties, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, Vol. XIII (London: Butler & Tanner, 1971)

Louis Auchincloss, Pioneers and Caretakers, A Study of 9 American Women Novelists, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966)

Louis Auchincloss, Edith Wharton, A Woman in Her Time (London: Michael Joseph, 1972)

Jaques Barzuan, The American University, How It Runs and Where It Is Going (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

R. P. Blackmur, The Lion and the Honeycomb: Essays in Solitude and Critique, 11th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955)

Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country, 2nd ed. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1964)

Frontiers of American Culture, ed. Ray B. Browne, Richard H. Crowder, Virgil L. Lokke, William T. Stafford (Indiana: Purdue University Studies, 1968)

W. C. Brownell, American Prose Masters, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967)

- Richard M. Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday, 1957)
- F.W. Dupee, Henry James, American Men of Letters Series (London: Methuen, 1951)
- Charles E. Eisenger, Fiction of the Forties, Phoenix Books (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965)
- Joseph Frank, The Widening Gyre, Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963)
- Philip L. Gerber, Theodore Dreiser, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964)
- Sheldon N. Grebstein, Sinclair Lewis, Twayne's United States Authors Series, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962)
- Richard Griffiths & Arthur Mayer, The Movies, 2nd ed. (London: Spring Books, 1964)
- P. Grover, 'Two Modes of Possessing - Conquest and Appreciation: The Princess Casamassima and L'Education Sentimental', Modern Language Review, Vol. 66, No. 4, Oct. 1971, p.760
- Doris Grumbach, The Company She Kept, Mary McCarthy Herself and Her Writing (London: The Bodley Head, 1967)
- Calvin S. Hall & Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1957)
- Harry B. Henderson III, Versions of the Past, The Historical Imagination in American Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974)
- William Faulkner, Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery, 2nd ed. (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1969)
- The Stature of Theodore Dreiser, A Critical Survey of the Man and his Work, ed. Alfred Kazin & Charles Shapiro, Midland Books (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965)
- Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser, His World and His Novels, 2nd ed. (Carbondale & Edwardsville: South Illinois University Press, 1971)
- F. R. Leavis, The Common Pursuit, 3rd ed., Peregrine Books (Middlesex, 1966)
- Saul Bellow and the Critics, ed. Irvin Malin (New York: New York University Press, 1969)
- Jay Martin, Harvests of Change, American Literature 1865-1945 (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962)
- F. O. Matthiessen, Henry James: The Major Phase, A Galaxy Book (New York, 1963)

- F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman, 2nd paperback ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971)
- Contemporary American Novelists, ed. Harry T. Moore (Toronto: Forum House, 1969)
- Robert Nisbet, The Degradation of the Academic Dogma: The University in America, 1945-1970 (London: Heinemann, 1971)
- Richard Poirier, A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- Robert Scholes, The Fabulators, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967)
- Sallie Sears, The Negative Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968)
- Herbert Spencer, First Principles (New York, n.d.)
- Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, An Essay in Historical Criticism (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1955)
- The American Novel, From James Fenimore Cooper to William Faulkner, ed. Wallace Stegner, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1965)
- William Stott, Documentary Expression and Thirties America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973)
- Tony Tanner, City of Words, American Fiction 1950-1970 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971)
- William Thorp, American Writing in the Twentieth Century, 5th ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967)
- Parker Tyler, Magic and Myth of the Movies, 1st pub. (New York: Holt & Co., 1947), this ed., 1st British ed. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971)
- Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel, From the Birth of the Nation to the Middle of the Twentieth Century (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967)
- Faulkner, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren, Twentieth Century Views (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1966)
- The Shock of Recognition, The Development of Literature in the United States Recorded by the Men who made It, ed. Edmund Wilson (London: W. H. Allen, 1956)
- Harold S. Wilson, McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

- James Agee & Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (London: Peter Own, 1965)
- John Barth, The Floating Opera (New York: Appleton, 1956)
- John Barth, The Sot-Weed Factor (New York: Doubleday, 1960)
- John Barth, Giles Goat-Boy (New York: Doubleday, 1966)
- Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward, 1st pub. 1888, this ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967)
- William Burroughs, Junkie (London: Four Square Books, 1966)
- Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage and Other Stories, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- Theodore Dreiser, The Financier, 1st pub. 1912, this ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co., 1940)
- Theodore Dreiser, The Titan, 1st pub. 1914, this ed., Signet Classic (New York, 1965)
- John Hawkes, Death, Sleep and The Traveler (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975)
- Henry James, Washington Square, 1st pub. 1880, this ed., 6th ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1970)
- Henry James, The Spoils of Poynton, 1st pub. 1897, this ed., 6th ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex 1967)
- Henry James, What Maisie Knew, 1st pub. 1897, this ed., Penguin Modern Classic (Middlesex, 1966)
- Henry James, The Wings of the Dove, 1st pub. 1903, this ed., The Bodley Head Henry James, Vol. VIII (New York, 1969)
- Henry James, The Ambassadors, 1st pub. 1903, this ed., New York Edition, Vol. XII (New York, 1937)
- Henry James, The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel, Vol. X (London, 1964)
- Norman Mailer, The Armies of the Night (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968)
- Norman Mailer, Miami and the Siege of Chicago (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968)
- Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967)
- Philip Roth, Portnoy's Complaint, 8th ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 197J)

Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (London: Chapman & Hall, n.d.)

Gore Vidal, Messiah (London: Heinemann, 1955)

Attention is drawn to the fact that the copyright of this thesis rests with its author.

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior written consent.